CHATS ON
D LACE & NEEDLEWORK

MRS LOWES

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CHATS ON OLD LACE AND NEEDLEWORK

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MARY SIDNEY, COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE.

CHATS ON OLD LACE AND NEEDLEWORK

BY

MRS. LOWES

WITH 88 ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

ADELPHI TERRACE

MARY SIDNEY, COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE.

Born about 1555. Died 1621.

Buried at Salisbury Cathedral.

Painted probably by Marc Gheeraerts.

"Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse,
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother:
Death! ere thou hast slain another
Fair and learn'd and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee."

CHATS ON OLD LACE AND NEEDLEWORK

BY

MRS. LOWES

WITH 76 ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.

ADELPHI TERRACE

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PREFACE

THIS little book has been compiled to emphasise and accentuate the distinct awakening of English women and Needlecraft Artists to the beauty of the ancient laces and embroideries which we own in the magnificent historic collections in our great public Museums.

We are fortunate in possessing in the Victoria and Albert Museum monumental specimens of both lace and needlework. Among the sumptuous lace collection there are most perfect specimens of the art of lace-making, and priceless pieces of historic embroidery made when England was first and foremost in the world in the production of Ecclesiastical embroidery.

The lace collection particularly, without compare, is illustrative of all that is best in this delightful art, being specially rich in magnificent pieces that can never be again obtained. These have mostly been given, or left as legacies, to the Museum by collectors and enthusiasts who have made this fascinating hobby the quest of their lives. In

addition to the collection formed by the generosity of the donors, the authorities have exercised a very catholic judgment in selecting the choicest and most illustrative examples of the lace-maker's craft.

In the section devoted to embroideries, more particularly English (as it is with our own country's needlework I propose to deal), nothing more glorious in the Nation's art records can be found than the masterpieces of embroidery worked by the great ladies, the abbesses and nuns of the Mediæval period. In almost every other branch of art England has been equalled, if not excelled, by Continental craftsmen; but in this one instance, up to the Reformation, English work was sought after far and wide, and as *opus Anglicum* formed part of church furnishing and priestly vestments in every great cathedral in Italy, Spain, and France.

It cannot be too soon realised that, as with old furniture, porcelain, and silver, much of the finest embroideries of England, and a vast quantity of the ancient laces of Italy, France, and Belgium are being slowly but surely carried off to the New World. American dollars are doing much to rob not only the Old Country of the fairest flowers of her garden, but the Continent of their finest and best examples of the genius of the past. The Vanderbilts and the Astors, among others, possess immense fortunes in lace, whilst that omnivorous collector Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan gives fabulous sums for any fine old relic of embroidery. Many pieces of both classes of needlecraft have found a permanent home in the

Metropolitan Museum of New York, and are lost for ever to the English student.

It is, therefore, a pleasant duty to add my little quota of information to the study of these fascinating and exquisite branches of fine art which so specially appeal to all women by their dainty grace and delightful handicraft. I hope I may arouse some little enthusiasm in my countrywomen in the study of the past glories of both subjects, and in the possibility of once again becoming first and foremost in the latter branch.

I beg to acknowledge the pleasure and help I have received from the perusal of the late Mrs. Bury Palliser's exhaustive "History of Lace," and Lady Alford's "History of Needlework," and Dr. Rock's invaluable books on "Ecclesiastical Embroidery."

EMILY LEIGH LOWES.

HILLCREST,
BRIXTON HILL,
S.W.

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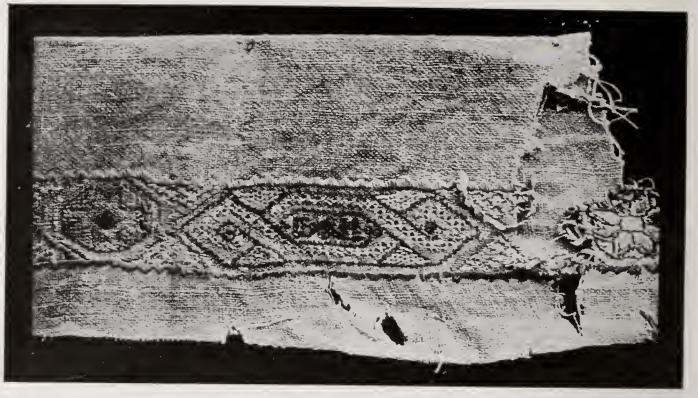
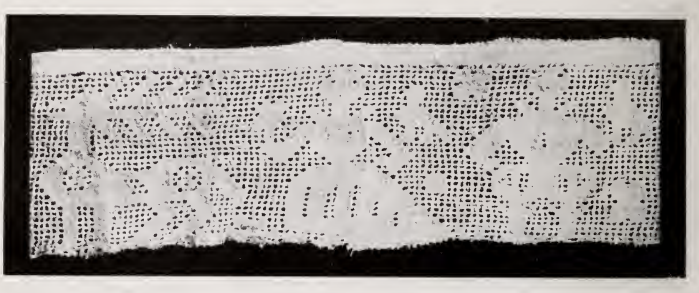
I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LACE



EGYPTIAN CUT AND DRAWN WORK.

Found in a tomb in Thebes.



OLD ITALIAN "CUTWORKE."

(*Author's Collection.*)

CHATS ON OLD LACE

I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LACE

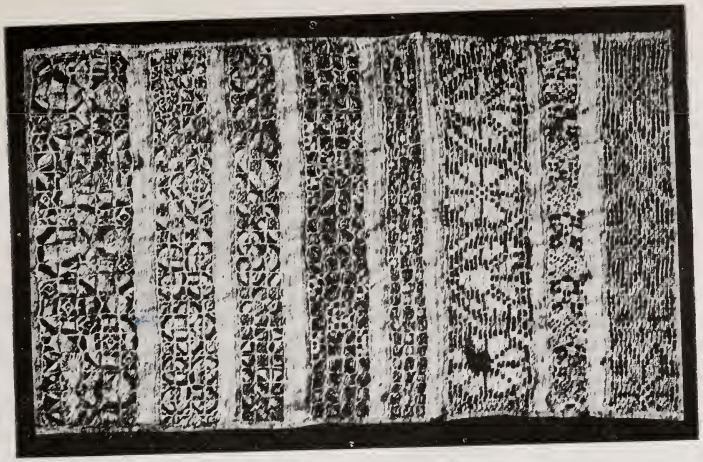
Early vestiges in Egypt—Lace found in St. Cuthbert's Tomb (685 A.D.)—Drawn Thread and Cutworks—Venetian Lace—Flanders Lace—French Laces—English Lace.

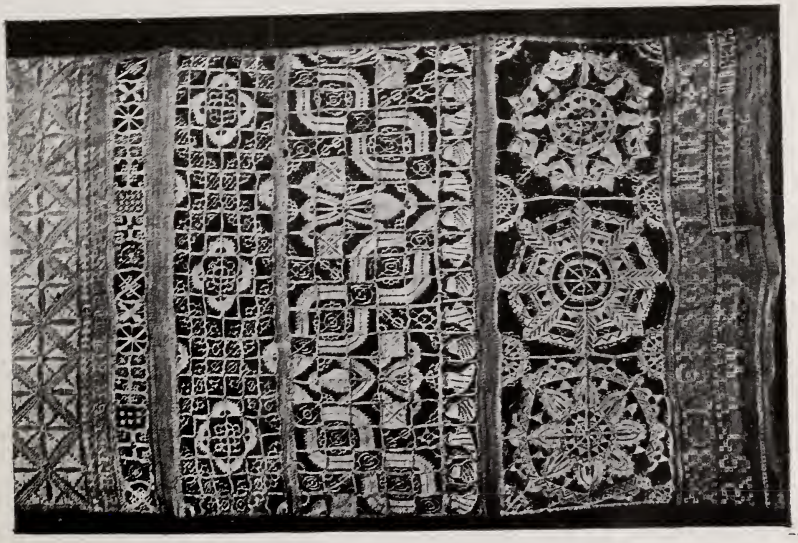
IN every other art or craft we can search the history of ages and find some vestiges or beginnings among the earlier civilisations. Possibly owing to the exquisite fragility of Lace, there is a complete absence of data earlier than that of Egypt. The astonishing perfection in art handicrafts of all descriptions which we find in China many hundreds of years before the Christian era shows no vestiges of a manufacture of lace; but, in the tombs of ancient Egypt, garments have been discovered with the edges frayed and twisted into what we may call a primitive lace, and in some of the Coptic embroideries threads have been drawn out at intervals and replaced with those of coloured wools, making an uncouth but

striking design. Netting must have been understood, as many of the mummies found at Thebes and elsewhere are discovered wearing a net to hold or bind the hair; and also, a fine network, interspersed with beads, is often discovered laid over the breast, sometimes having delightful little blue porcelain deities strung amongst their meshes.

These early vestiges, however, are in no way representative of the later exquisite fabrics which we now know and recognise as Lace. Far nearer to them, as an art, are the early gold and silver laces of simple design found amongst the tombs of Mycenæ and Etruria, and those of a later date—*i.e.*, the laces of gold used to decorate the vestments of the clergy, and the simple but sumptuous gowns of the Middle Ages. Along with the stole and maniple of St. Cuthbert, which are now at Durham Cathedral, was found a piece of detached gold lace, which must have formed a separate trimming. St. Cuthbert died in 685 A.D., and was buried at Lindisfarne, his body being afterwards transferred to Durham to save it from the desecration of the Danes who were ravaging the land. Over the body was a cloth, or sheet, which was worked in cutworks and fringes, showing that even at so early a date initial efforts at lace-making had been attempted.

As far as we can gather, the earliest endeavour at lace-making originated with the drawing of threads in linen fabrics, then dividing the existing threads into strands, and working over them, in various fanciful designs, either with a buttonhole stitch or simply a wrapping stitch. Exactly this method is used at





EARLY ENGLISH SAMPLERS, SHOWING CUT AND DRAWN WORK.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

the present day, and is known as hem-stitching and fine-drawing. A later development suggested, apparently, cutting away of some of the threads, their place being supplied with others placed angularly or in circles. Many delightful examples of the work are to be seen in our Old English samplers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and even so recently as thirty years ago specimens of this primitive and early lace-making were to be seen in the quaint "smock-frock" of the English farm labourer, a garment which, though discarded by the wearer in favour of the shoddy products of the Wakefield looms, is now deemed worthy of a place in the collector's museum.

It required little effort of fancy and skill, by the simple process of evolution and survival of the fitting, to expand this plan of cutting away threads and replacing them with others to doing away *entirely* with existing and attached threads, and supplying the whole with a pattern of threads laid down on some geometric fashion on a backing of parchment, *working over* and *connecting* the patterns together, and afterwards liberating the entire work from the parchment, thereby making what was known at the time as "punto in aria," or working with the needle-point in the air, literally "*out of nothing*."

Strange as this may appear, this was the origin, in the fifteenth century, of the whole wonderful fabric which afterwards became known as "Point lace," which altered and even revolutionised dress, made life itself beautiful, and supplied the women of Europe with a livelihood gained in an easy, artistic, and

delightful manner. It also, however, led to ruinous expenditure in every country, at times requiring special edicts to restrain its extravagance, and even the revival of the old Sumptuary laws to repress it.

The earliest known lace, and by far the most popular with all classes, was "Reticella," which was the first kind evolved on the "punto in aria" principle. Until the discovery of an easy and simple way of decorating the linen ruffs and cuffs of the period these had been quite plain, as many contemporary portraits show. Afterwards the fashion of trimming garments of all descriptions with the pointed wiry edges of Venice became a mania, and led to imitation in almost every country of Europe. The convents turned out an immense quantity, thereby adding enormously to the incomes of their establishments. It is assumed that it is to the nuns of Italy we owe the succeeding elaboration of Reticella, "Needlepoint," the long, placid hours spent in the quiet convent gardens, lending themselves to the refinement and delicacy which this exquisite fabric made necessary. However this may be, it is certain that in a few years the rise and development of Needlepoint lace-making was little short of phenomenal, and every convent was busy making it and teaching their poorer lay sisters the art. (Some of the wonderful Old Point of this period is absolutely finer than the naked eye can see, a powerful magnifying glass being necessary to discern how the marvellous "toile" or "gimpe" is made.)

A little later, but still contemporary with the introduction of Venetian lace, a Pillow lace was being

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made in Flanders, the origin of which is not as yet discovered. It is possible that the fine flax thread grown and manufactured there may, at the time of weaving, have suggested a looser and more ornamental material, but that remains a matter of conjecture. There must, however, have been an interchange of examples, as about this time Pillow-made lace appeared in Italy, and led to the making of the Milanese and Genoese varieties, and Needlepoint motifs appeared amongst the woven network of Flanders.

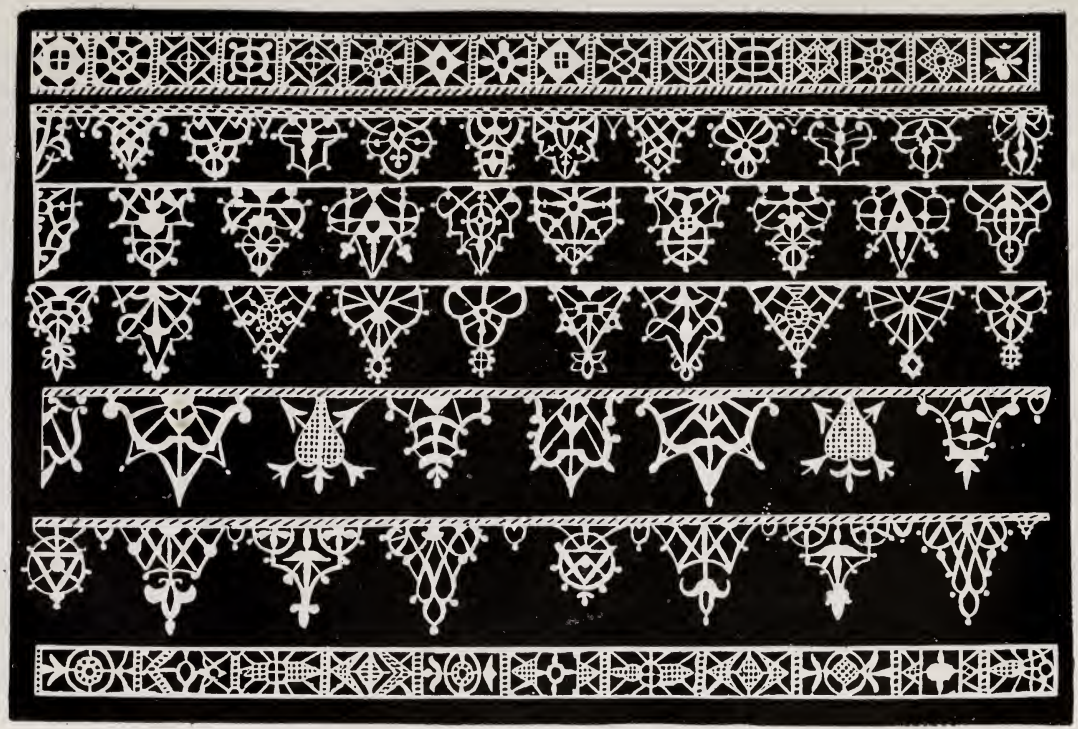
Lace, under the name of "Lacis," had been known in France from the time of Catherine de Medici, who patronised the manufacturers and used it lavishly. About 1585 she induced Federico di Vinciolo, a lace-maker and designer of Venice, to settle in France, and there the making of Venetian lace was attempted. A mere slavish imitation of the Venetian school resulted, and it was not until the age of the *Grande Monarque*, Louis XIV., that French lace rivalled that of Venice.

Colbert, the great French Minister, becoming alarmed at the enormous sums spent on Italian lace, determined to put a check to its importation; and, by forbidding its use, establishing lace schools near Alençon, and bribing Italian workers to come over as organisers and teachers, started the manufacture of lace on an extensive scale, the beautiful fabrics known as Point d'Alençon, Point d'Argentan, and Point d'Argentella being the result. It is frequently said that the last-named lace came from Genoa or Milan, but most of the present-day

authorities agree that this is one of the many fairy tales with which the passing of time has adorned the history of lace.

The persecution of the Protestants when the Huguenots fled to England, bringing with them their arts of silk-weaving and lace-making, led to the introduction of English lace. Devonshire apparently received a contingent of laceworkers quite distinct from those who settled in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, and from the first stages showed far finer methods and designs. With the exception of "Old Honiton," England cannot boast of anything very fine, and even this is merely a meaningless meandering of woven tape-like design for the greater part. The lace of Buckinghamshire ranks, perhaps, lowest in the scale of lace products, its only merit being its extreme durability.

The laces of Ireland are of comparatively recent growth, and though in many instances exquisitely fine, do not as yet show much originality.



ORIGINAL PATTERNS DESIGNED BY VINCIOLA.

II

THE ART OF LACE-MAKING

II

THE ART OF LACE-MAKING

Needlepoint—Pillow Laces—Charts of various Réseaux—Technical Terms.

LACE-MAKING naturally falls into two classes—the Needlepoint and Pillow varieties. In some laces, more especially of the Belgian class, there is a *mixed* lace, the "toile" or pattern, being worked with the needle, and the ground, or "réseau," made round it on the pillow and *vice versâ*.

To the first-named class we must assign the Needlepoint laces of Italy and the exquisite hand-made laces of France. To the latter order belong the early Macramé lace, called "Punto a Groppo"; the Genoese and Milanese laces of Italy; Mechlin and Brussels of Belgium; Valenciennes, Lille, and Chantilly of France; and the English laces of Honiton, Buckinghamshire, and Bedfordshire.

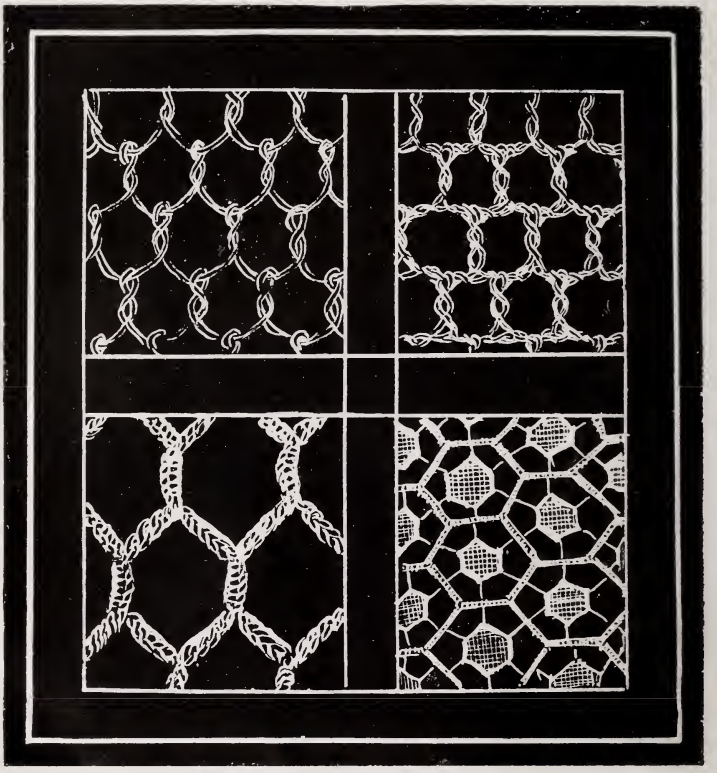
Pillow lace may be easily distinguished from Point lace, as in the former the ground, or réseau, is made of plaited threads. That of Point lace is composed of threads made by the use of the button-

hole stitch only, or, in the case of Alençon point, the mesh is worked in a special manner. The later laces, *i.e.*, those made during the last hundred years, have frequently a ground of machine lace, and thus, strictly speaking, are not lace at all, but only embroideries or appliqués. The machine-made ground can be distinguished by sense of touch alone. If we take a piece of hand-made net between the finger and thumb and slightly roll it, it will gather in a soft little roll, with the touch almost of floss silk. The machine-made net is hard, stiff, and wiry, and remains perceptibly so in this test. Also, the mesh of machine-made lace is as regular as though made with a fine machine fret-saw, that of hand-made lace being of varying sizes, and often following the pattern of the lace design.

The accompanying diagrams illustrates the various grounds, and will prove an infallible guide in distinguishing the points of difference between Point and Pillow lace.

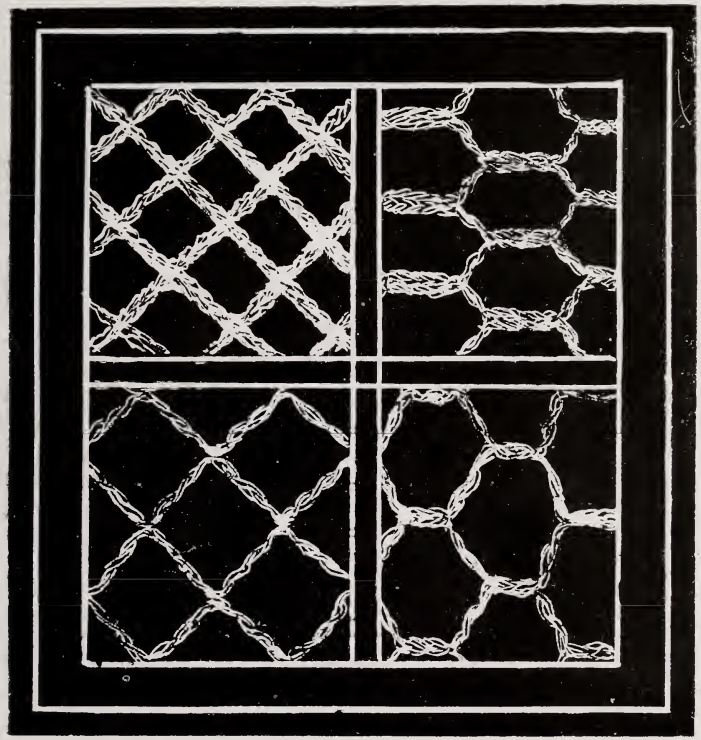
Various special and technical terms are used in describing the method of making lace. Without burdening the reader too much, a few special terms must be explained.

Brides (literally "bridges").—These are the connections between the various parts of a lace design, both in Needle-point and Bobbin lace. In the former, they are made entirely of a strand or two of thread thrown across, and then buttonholed over, sometimes with tiny loops on the edges, and in Venetian lace often having minute stars worked upon them.



NEEDLEPOINT RÉSEAUX.

No. 1.—Brussels.
No. 2.—Alençon.
No. 3.—Argentan
No. 4.—Argentella.



PILLOW RÉSEAUX.

No. 1.—Valenciennes.
No. 2.—Brussels.
No. 3.—Lille.
No. 4.—Mechlin.

Beading.—A tiny looped edge used to finish woven or Pillow-made lace.

Bobbins.—One of the essential parts of a Pillow worker's outfit. These are small, elongated bobbins made of ivory, bone, or wood, on which is wound the lace-maker's thread. Sometimes they have been made very ornamental with carving and other decorations, and frequently have "gingles," or a bunch of coloured beads attached to one end. The terms "Bobbin lace" and "Bone lace" are derived from these and are synonymous with "Pillow lace."

Cordonnet.—In most *Point* laces the design is outlined with a raised *cord* either worked over closely with buttonhole stitches, or made separately and then stitched down. The Cordonnet is one of the characteristic features of the raised Venetian points and the French laces of Alençon or Argentan.

Couronnes.—These are decorations of the Cordonnet especially noticeable in the raised Venetian laces, in which sometimes the lace is raised and worked upon no less than four separate times.

Dentelé.—Lace designed in scallop-form, chiefly used for border laces.

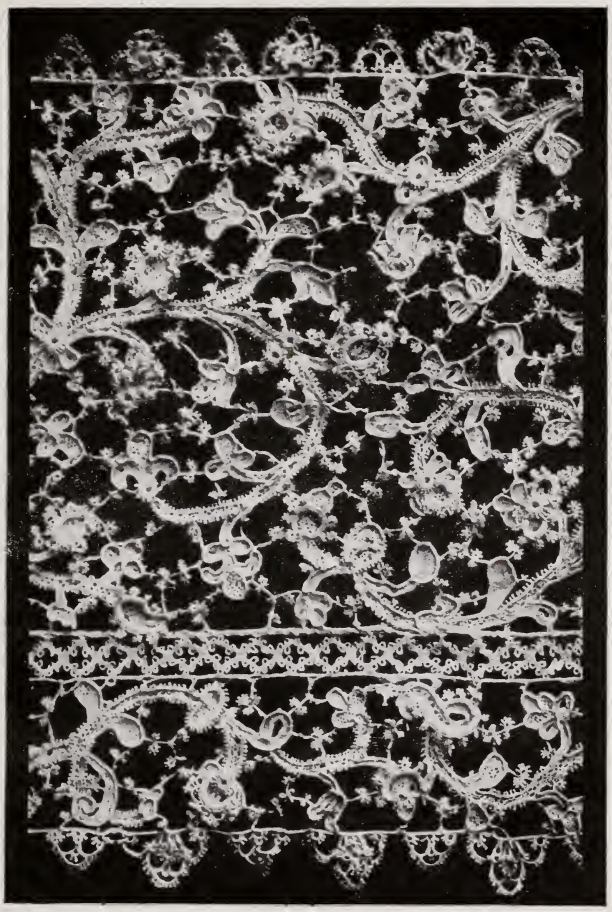
Fillings.—This word most easily explains the ordinary terms of "modes" and "à jours." The inner parts of the pattern in Needlepoint and Pillow lace are filled in with various ornamental stitches, showing an amazing variety of design. By these fillings various laces may often be distinguished, as each factory had its favourite "modes."

Grounds.—There are two varieties of grounds, one made with Brides, and the other either with Needle-

point or Pillow network. Other names for these are "Réseaux" and "Fonds." The method of making Needlepoint or woven ground often decides the date and class of the lace.

Guipure.—Literally a *tape lace.* The name however is applied to all Pillow laces having a tape-like design on them.

Picots.—The little loop used to ornament a plain bride or tie.



VENETIAN ROSE POINT.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

III

THE LACES OF ITALY

VENETIAN ROSE POINT.

Seventeenth Century. (*Author's Collection.*)

III

THE LACES OF ITALY

The Venetian Laces

Venetian lace—"Rose Point"—"Point de Neige"—"Gros Point"—"Punto Tagliato a Foliami"—The South Kensington Collection.

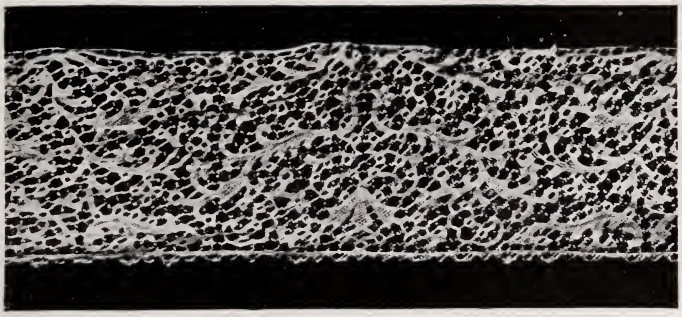
NEEDLEPOINT lace is made with needle and thread and principally in buttonhole stitches. A traced parchment pattern is procured, the outline made with a solitary thread stitched down to the parchment at frequent intervals. The thread is then worked over with fine buttonhole stitches; the modes or fillings have a fine network of threads stretched across, afterwards being buttonholed into a variety of designs. The edges are then again worked upon with loops or picots, and in "Rose Point" tiny stars or roses are worked on suitable parts of the design, sometimes the "roses" or "stars" being three in numbers, one poised upon the other. This is known as "Point de Neige" the whole surface of the lace being literally sprinkled with tiny stars

somewhat representing a fine snowfall. The design is then connected with fine "brides," these in their turn being dotted and purled with stars and loops. Most of this exquisite lace requires a powerful magnifying-glass to discern the intricacy of the work.

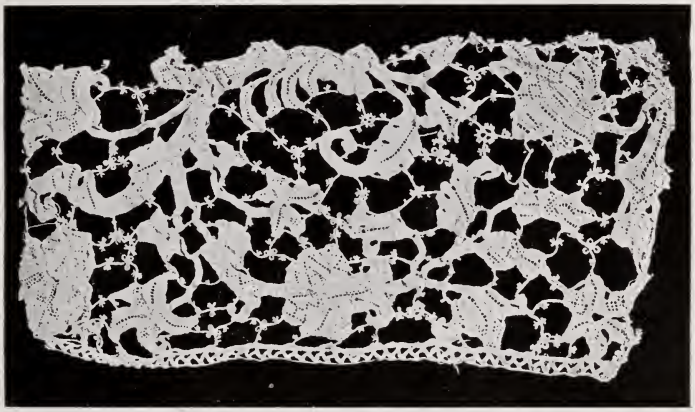
The finest lace of this variety was produced in the sixteenth century, the designs being bold, handsome, and purely Renaissance in type. That of the Louis Quatorze period shows the personal influence of his reign, frequently having tiny figures worked in the design. A collar in my possession has the Indian worshipping the sun (the King's glory was said to rival that of the sun) repeated in each scallop. This was a favourite design in the magnificent "Point de France" which was made during the long reign of Louis, under the management of Colbert.

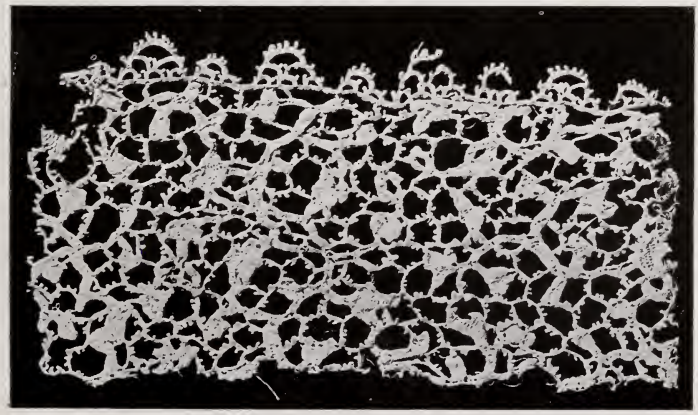
It is absolutely certain that the laces known as Venetian Point originated in Italy. Pattern books still exist showing how the early Reticella developed into this magnificent lace. In the National Library at the South Kensington Museum, may be seen the very patterns designed by Vinciolo, Vicellio, and Isabella Parasole. These publications actually came from Venice, and being reproduced in France, Germany, Belgium, and England, quickly aroused immense enthusiasm, and lace-making spread far and wide, at first all other laces being mere imitations of the Venetian.

The chief varieties of the Venetian laces are known as Rose Point, Point de Neige, Gros Point de Venise (often erroneously attributed to Spain and called Spanish Point), and Point Plat de Venise. A much



CORALLINE POINT (VENETIAN).





POINT PLAT DE VENISE (FLAT VENETIAN).

(*Author's Collection.*)

MARIE DE MEDICIS WEARING THE MEDICIS COLLAR
TO DISPLAY VENETIAN LACES.

rarer variety is "Venetian point à réseau," which is the flat point worked round with a Needlepoint ground or mesh, the network following no proper order but being simply worked round the pattern and following its curves.

The chief characteristics of Venetian lace are the buttonhole Cordonnet, fine or thick according to the style of lace; the wonderful diversities of the fillings worked in buttonhole stitches; the elaborate decoration of the Cordonnet; and the starry effects of the brides or ties. In the flat Venetian Point there is no Cordonnet.

These Italian laces were admired and purchased by all the European countries, and the cities of Venice and Florence made enormous fortunes. The fashions of the day led to their extensive use, Marie de Medicis introducing the Medici collar trimmed with Venetian points specially to display them. At a little later period the collar became more falling and the heavier "Gros point" was used. Men and women alike wore lace-trimmed garments to an excessive degree, the collar and cuff trimmings being composed of wide Venetian lace and the silken scarf worn across the body being edged with narrower and finer lace.

The principal designs for the Venetian lace of all periods were scrolls of flowers conventionalised in the Renaissance taste of the time. The generic name for all laces of the finest period is "Punto tagliato a foliami." The laces of this time are now almost priceless. They are genuine works of art, worked slowly and patiently under the clear light of the Italian skies by women who were naturally artistic

and beauty loving, and who, while working the shining needle and fairy thread in and out of the intricacies of the design sang the pretty "Lace Songs" which may be heard at the Burano Lace School even now, although 200 or 300 years old. Many specimens of this exquisite lace are to be found in the South Kensington Museum, where the flounce given by Mrs. Bolckow at once explains the whole scheme of Venetian lace-making.

Such lace is not to be purchased now except at great price. The piece illustrated, see page 55, was only 1⅛ yards in length, and was sold for £145 by one of our leading lacemen. Barely 5 yards of Venetian lace, only 2 inches wide and *in rags*, was sold at Debenham & Storr's in August, 1907, for £60; and even the smallest collar or a pair of cuffs runs well into £10.

Even in the days of its manufacture this lace commanded high prices. In the inventory of Queen Elizabeth's gowns we find such entries as—

"To 1 yard Double Italian Cut-worke, ¼ yd. wide. 55/4.

„ 3 yds. broad needlework lace of Italy, with purls. 50/- per yd."

James II. paid £29 for a cravat.

VERY FINE EXAMPLE OF "GROS POINT DE VENISE."

IV

THE LACES OF GENOA AND MILAN

LOUIS XIII. OF FRANCE, SHOWING VANDYKE LACE COLLAR AND NARROWER LACE ON SCARF.

IV

THE LACES OF GENOA AND MILAN

Argentella wrongly called Italian—Genoese—Mixed laces—Milanese—Macramé.

THESE are mostly Pillow laces, but fine Point laces were also manufactured in these towns. In the first-named town it is said that the lace called "Argentella" was made, but this is extremely doubtful, most authorities arguing that it was certainly a French lace made at the best period.

A very representative lace of Genoa is known as collar lace, very widely used for the falling collars of the Vandyke period. It was an exceedingly beautiful and decorative lace, and almost indestructible. Specimens of this lace can even now easily be secured at a fair price. The laces known as "Pillow Guipure" are somewhat open to question, the authorities at South Kensington Museum agreeing to differ, and labelling most of the specimens "Italian or Flemish." The finer pieces of this type of lace may safely be described as "Flemish," as the flax-thread grown and made in Flanders was much finer than that grown in the Southern Countries.

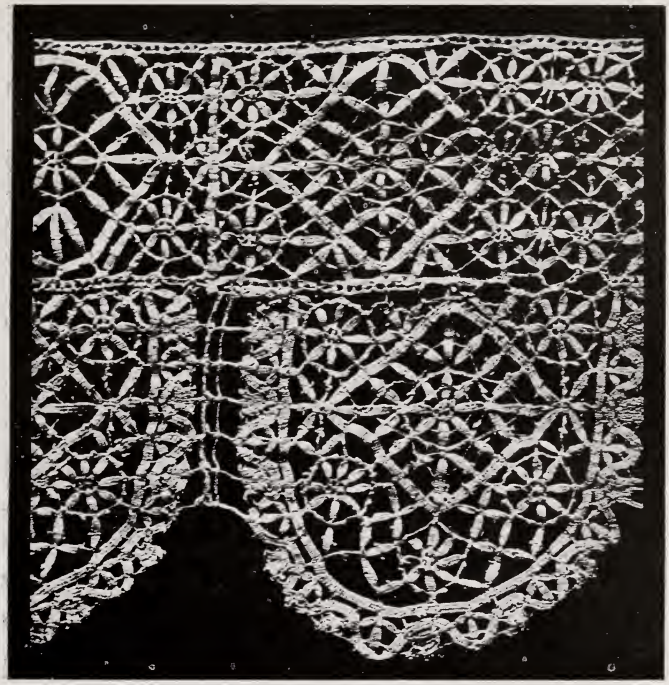
Much of the Genoa lace was worked in what we term "mixed lace," the design being woven on the pillow, and the ground and fillings worked in with the needle either in a network or by brides and picots. A much inferior kind is made with a woven braid or tape, the turns of the pattern being made in twisted or puckered braid, much after the style of the hand-made Point lace made in England some thirty years ago. This lace was known as "Mezzo Punto," though the French were discourteous enough to term it "Point de Canaille," as undoubtedly it was an imitation of the finer laces made in a loose, poor style.

The lace of Milan is unquestionably the most beautiful of the Pillow laces of Italy. While resembling the plaited lace of Genoa, there is more individuality about it. Much of this fine lace was worked for church vestments and altar cloths. Various heraldic devices are frequently introduced, surrounded with elegant scroll designs, the whole being filled up with woven réseau, the lines of which are by no means regular, but are made to fill in the interstices.

Yet another Italian lace is known as

Punto a Groppo, or Macramé.

No doubt this was the earliest form of woven lace, and, indeed, it may claim an origin as early as the first garments worn by mankind. In the earliest remains of antiquity a *fringe* often decorates the edges of garments, curtains, and floor-covering, and seems to be a natural and fitting finish to what would otherwise be a hard, straight line. In the



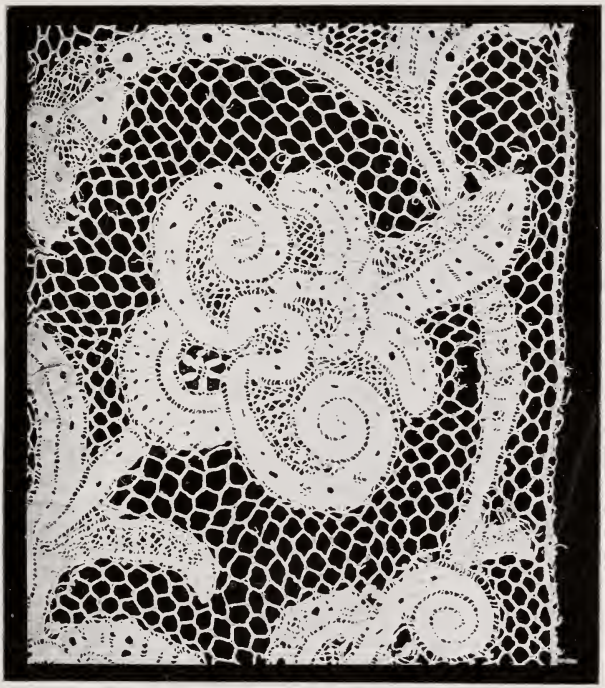
GENOESE LACE.

Sixteenth or Seventeenth Century.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

various Assyrian and Egyptian monuments this is noted again and again.

Some of the sixteenth-century pieces which we possess show simply an elaboration of the knotted fringe, while much of the later work is exceptionally fine. The work is so well known, owing to its revival during the last thirty years in a coarse form, that it needs little description. Its use, even at its best period, was confined to household use, for which purpose it seems particularly adapted.



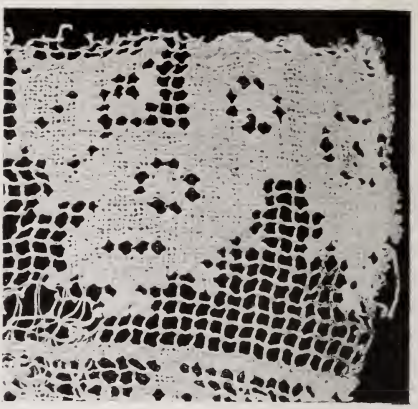
MILANESE LACE.

(*Author's Collection.*)

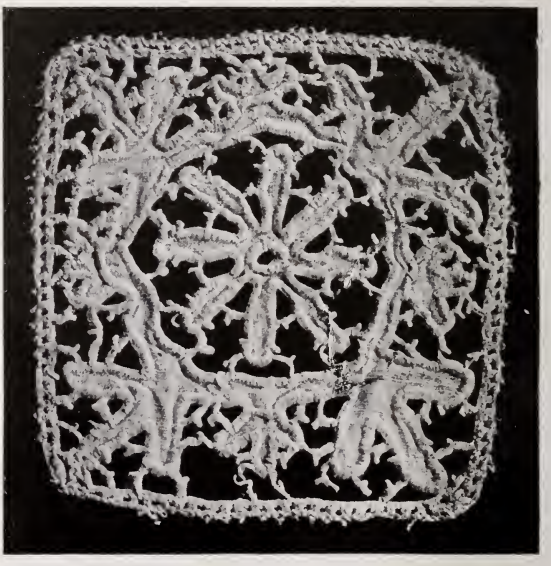
V

THE LACES OF FRANCE

"CUT-WORKE."



LACIS.



OLD ITALIAN AND FRENCH CUT AND DRAWN WORK AND "LACIS."

(*Author's Collection.*)

V

THE LACES OF FRANCE

The Needlepoint Laces of France

Catherine de Medici's collection of "Lacis"—Establishment of lace-making by Colbert—"Point de France"—"Point d'Alençon"—"Point d'Argentan"—Modern reproduction of these at Burano, Italy.

FRANCE in the sixteenth century, as always, led the van of fashion. Lace appears to have been extensively used long before its apotheosis at the Court of Louis le Grand, otherwise Louis XIV. Catherine de Medici patronised the manufacture of "*Lacis*," which was merely darned netting, more or less fine. At this time "Lacis" and "Cut-worke" were practically all that was known or used. Bed-hangings, curtains, and furniture-coverings were covered with alternate squares of lacis and cutwork. Afterwards the Reticella laces of Italy were imported and had an immense vogue, but it was not until the artistically glorious time of Louis XIV. that an attempt was made to encourage a manufacture of French laces.

Colbert, the astute Minister of Louis XIV., became

alarmed at the immense sums of money which went out of the country to purchase the laces of Venice, and, by means of bribing the best workers of the Venetian schools, he induced them to settle at L'Onray, near Alençon. In 1665 he had so far succeeded that lace rivalling that of Venice was being produced. The Venetians became alarmed in their turn (as, indeed, they had need to be) and issued an edict, ordering the lace-workers to return forthwith, or, failing this, the nearest relative would be imprisoned for life, and steps would be taken to have the truant lace-worker *killed*. If, however, he or she returned, complete forgiveness would be extended, and work found them *for life* at handsome remuneration. History does not tell us the result of this decree, but it evidently failed to destroy the lace manufacture of France.

At first the lace manufactured at Alençon received the name of "Point de France," and was absolutely indistinguishable from that of Venice. Its magnificence of design, indeed, may be said to have exceeded anything before attempted. The introduction of tiny figures was attributable to the overwhelming personality of Louis XIV., and was symbolical of his magnificent sway and far-reaching influence. In the illustration, page 75, an especially fine specimen of the lace, Madame de Montespan is seen seated under the crown, two small Indians are on either side; a tree bearing flags and trophies completes this tribute to the genius of the lace-makers and the splendour of the Court.

The name "Point de France" is given to all lace

"POINT DE FRANCE."

(*The property of Lady Kenmare.*)

POINT D'ALENÇON.

(Author's Collection.)

made from its commencement by Colbert's direction until about 1678, when the lace-workers, perhaps forgetting the traditions of the Venetian school, developed a style of their own and the work became more distinctly French, being more delicate, finer in substance, the patterns clearer and more defined. The importation also of the finer flax thread from Flanders brought the more exquisite Pillow lace of Brussels to the notice of the French lace-workers. The French, as a nation, have always been foremost in seizing upon new ideas and adapting them to their own artistic requirements. In this instance the result was admirable, and it gave to the world, not the finest lace, as it was impossible to surpass the earliest Venetian Point laces, but certainly the next lace in order of merit, "Point d' Alençon." The chief characteristic of the lace is the fine, clear ground, the stiff Cordonnet outlining the pattern, and the exquisite patterns in the "jours" or fillings.

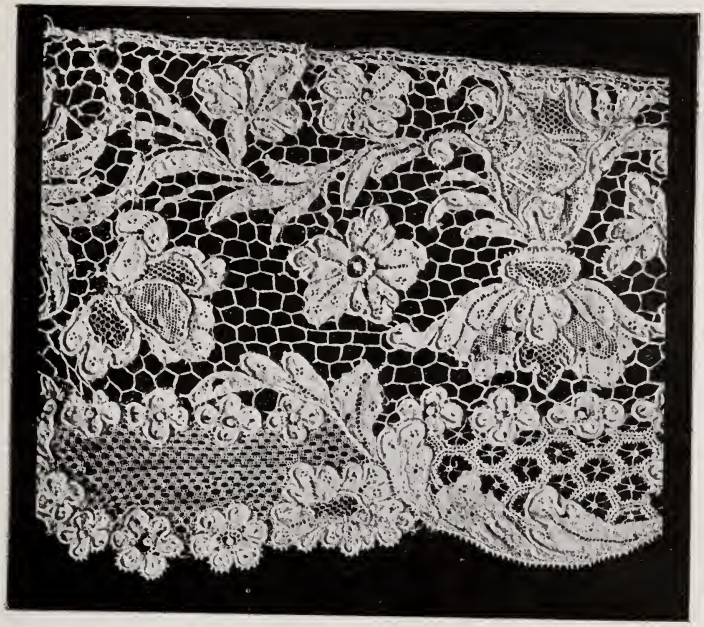
The cordonnet of Alençon is the only one which has horsehair for its foundation. A strand of hair is carefully stitched down to the edges and is buttonholed over with the finest thread, and is said, although giving the lace quite a character of its own, to have been the cause of much of its destruction, as, in washing, the hair contracts and curls. It will be noticed also that the ground is worked in strips, *shortways of the lace of less than an inch in length*, afterwards being stitched together in what is known as "fine joining." So elaborate was the original Point d'Alençon that no less than eighteen workers were

engaged on one single piece. Later the number was reduced to twelve, when the patterns became less ornate.

Although the factory of Alençon existed well into the early nineteenth century, the style of lace gradually deteriorated, until it is now non-existent! The lace made during the long reign of Louis XIV. is considered by far the finest and best, showing both grandeur of style and pattern and exquisite workmanship. Under Louis XV. the lace was equally well made, but the patterns followed the Rococo designs which were now introduced into all other decorative work, while in the reign of the ill-fated Louis XVI. it went completely out of fashion, Marie Antoinette affecting a much simpler style of lace. The Revolution finally caused the complete overthrow of Alençon lace, as of all fine art work in France. An attempt was made by Napoleon I. to revive it, but its glories had passed, and the hands of the workers had lost their cunning, the result being known as the worst type of lace, stiff and ugly in design and coarse of execution.

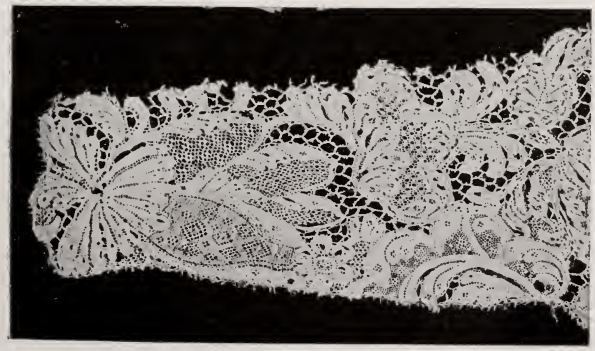
"*Point d'Argentan.*"

This lace is practically the same as Alençon with a variation of ground, which, to the uninitiated, appears coarse. A magnifying glass, however, will speedily dispel this illusion. The ground in itself is a marvellous piece of work, each of the sides of the mesh being covered with ten buttonhole stitches. Very frequently a mixed lace of Alençon and Argentan is found, the result being very fine.



"POINT DE FRANCE."

(*Author's Collection.*)

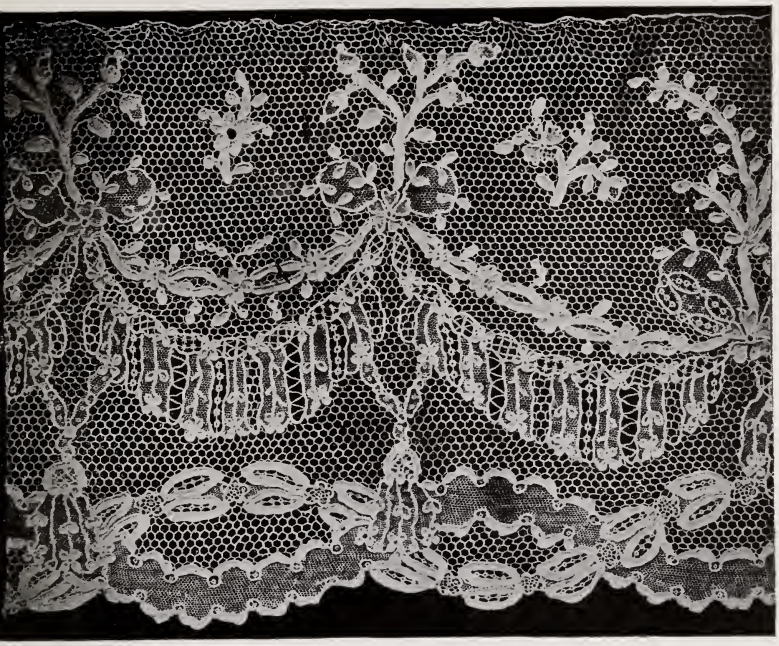


POINT D'ARGENTELLA.

Point d'Argentella.

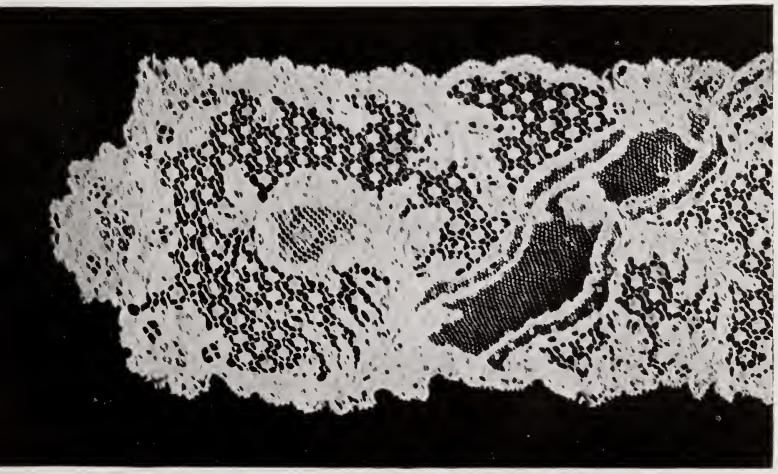
About this lace most authorities dispute, some stoutly advocating its claims to be French lace entirely and others averring that it was made *in imitation* of the Point d'Alençon by the Genoese. Be this as it may, the lace known as Point d'Argentella is exceptionally fine even amongst other fine laces, and is noted most specially for the fine "jours" which form an essential part of the pattern, every effort apparently being made to give extra scope for their employment. The specimen illustrated shows some of these "jours" having the characteristic mayflower, lozenge, and dotted patterns.

Much modern lace of this type is now made at Burano, Italy, where the coarse Italian lace formerly made there has been entirely superseded. It strongly imitates Alençon and Argentan lace, but is without the raised cord which is so typical of these, having the pattern outlined with flat buttonhole stitches only. By many connoisseurs this is considered the finest lace of this age, being far superior to modern Brussels. It is entirely hand-made, which cannot be, unfortunately, averred for Brussels, as the fine machine-made net, woven from the exquisitely fine thread manufactured in Flanders and Belgium, serves as the ground for all Brussels lace made at the present time, except when special orders like Royal trousseaux are in hand. The lace-makers of Burano, it may be added, imitate the finest Venetian Rose Point, Point de Gaze, Alençon, ever produced, the prices comparing very favourably with the old work, though still very costly.



POINT D'ARGENTAN WITH POINT D'ALENÇON BORDER.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

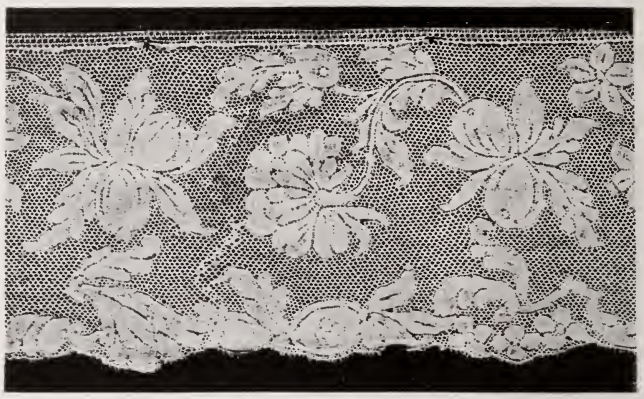


ARGENTELLA LACE, SHOWING THE "PARTRIDGE-EYE" GROUND.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

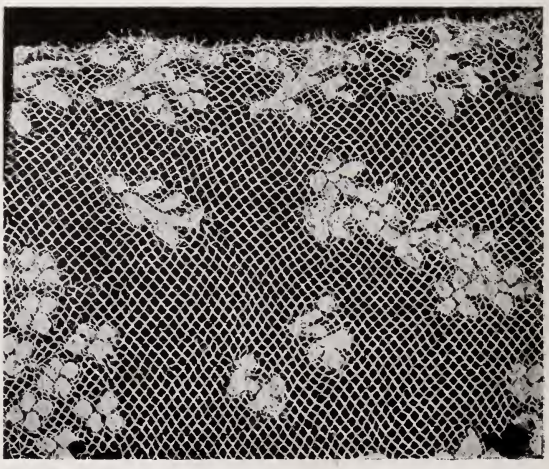
VI

THE PILLOW LACES OF FRANCE



EARLY VALENCIENNES.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)



OLD VALENCIENNES.

(*Author's Collection.*)

VI

THE PILLOW LACES OF FRANCE

Valenciennes, "Vraie" and "Fausse"—Lille—Chantilly—Blonde—Caen and Brittany.

Valenciennes.

VALENCIENNES was formerly part of Flanders, being in the province of Hainault. It became a French town in 1668 by treaty. Being a Flemish town, the lace made there was purely Pillow lace, and in fineness of thread and beauty of design it rivalled in its early stages some of the fine old Flemish laces, which are more like ornamental cambric than anything else.

There are two kinds of Valenciennes lace, known as "Vraie" and "Fausse." These names are very misleading, as they merely denote the laces made in the town itself, or in the outskirts.

Early Valenciennes can only be distinguished from Flemish laces of the same age by the difference in the *ground.* By reference to the little chart of lace stitches the distinction will easily be seen, the Valenciennes being much closer and thicker in

the plait, and having four threads on each side of its diamond-shaped mesh. Conventional scrolls and flowers were used as designs for the toile, the ground and the pattern being made at the same time.

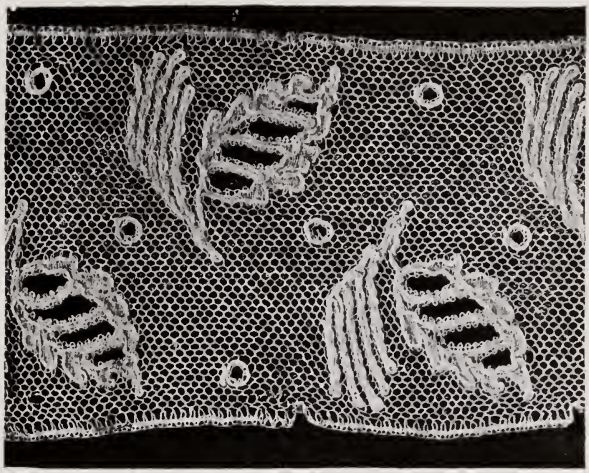
This lace is said to have been worked, like that of Brussels, in dark, damp cellars, the moist atmosphere being necessary to prevent the tiny thread breaking. The lace-workers became nearly blind, and quite useless, long before they reached thirty years of age.

So expensive was the fabric that a pair of ruffles for a gentleman's coat would sell for 4,000 livres. Madame du Barri made extravagant use of this lovely lace. In her wardrobe accounts are mentioned, in 1771, head-dress, throatlets, fichus, and ruffles, "all plissé de Vraie Valenciennes." The amount of lace used for a head-dress alone is said to have cost 2,400 livres.

The "Vraie Valenciennes" was practically indestructible, earning the nickname of the "Eternal Valenciennes" from its durability. The well-to-do bourgeoise used to invest her savings in real lace, treasuring and wearing it on all best occasions for a lifetime.

The lace-makers of the town itself were so satisfied with their own lace that they proudly boasted that if a length commenced in the town of Valenciennes were taken and completed *by the same worker, and with the same thread,* outside their own damp atmosphere, the exact point of difference would be shown in the piece.

The earliest Valenciennes laces show a closer



"OLD LILLE."

(*Author's Collection.*)

design than that made later, which, by the way, many connoisseurs much prefer. The latter type is of clearer ground and more open design. The flowers do not follow the large scroll-like pattern of Flanders, but suggest the detached sprays and festoons of Alençon and Argentan. In both types there is no cord outlining either pattern or edge. All is flat as a piece of fine lawn.

Lille.

By no means a *favourite* lace at any time, Lille ranks next in merit as a hand-made lace. The mesh is clearer and larger than most French or Belgian laces, being made by the simple twisting of two threads on four sides. The patterns are simple, and are outlined with a loose flax thread of silky appearance. The straight edges which characterise Old Lille lace certainly did not lend elegance to it. A large manufacture in black lace was commenced, and the black silk mantles of the eighteenth century were lavishly trimmed with it. It is entirely out of favour at this day, however, only the finest white variety being sought after.

Lace is still manufactured at Lille, but the patterns of Mechlin are copied, although the tiny square dots, one of the distinguishing points of old Lille, are still used.

Chantilly.

The white laces of Chantilly much resemble Lille, having the same fine, clear ground and a thick, silky-looking thread outlining the pattern. A little lace

school was established by the Duchesse de Rohan early in the seventeenth century, and for quite a hundred years white laces were made, and became popular. Marie Antoinette used this pretty lace as well as Valenciennes extensively to trim her favourite lawn dresses and fichus when she and the ladies of her Court retired to the Petit Trianon to play at being shepherdesses.

About the middle of the eighteenth century Chantilly began to produce black silk lace of very fine quality. This is practically the only black lace for which there is any market. A Chantilly fan or a Chantilly shawl will always find purchasers. The exquisite fineness of its ground, the elegance of its floral festoons and bouquets, make it a desirable possession. With the Revolution the manufacture of real old black Chantilly ceased, and was only revived with the Empire, when, in addition to copying the old designs, the manufacture of the famous *blonde* laces was commenced.

French Blonde Lace.

At first these filmy silk laces were made in the natural colour floss silk imported from China, hence its name "Blonde." Some of the finest specimens are in this colour. Afterwards, when the art of bleaching the silk was discovered, it was made in a peculiarly silvery colour, the loosely woven silk being worked in patterns on what appears a ground of gossamer. Black Blonde was afterwards manufactured, the lace being very different to that of nineteenth-century manufacture, the mesh being large and open. This

"THE EMPRESS EUGENIE" WEARING BLONDE LACE.

(*From a Baxter print.*)

was a favourite lace with the Spaniards for mantillas, and much prosperity resulted to the little town of Chantilly. As with all other laces, the introduction of machinery killed the industry as an art, and the only Blonde laces now made are by machine, and are quite inartistic and inelegant. Hand-made Chantilly in black silk is still manufactured, but it has only a limited output.

Other French Laces.

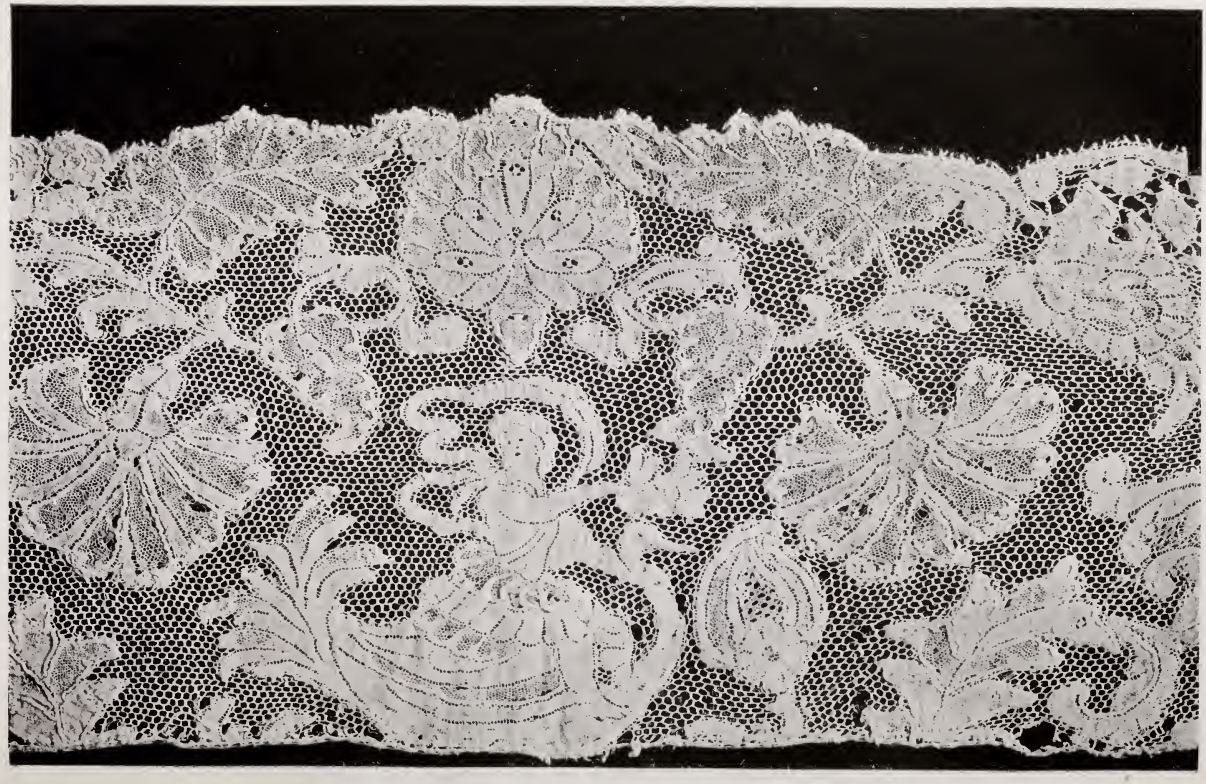
Lace has been made in many smaller towns in France, but in no instance has it been of sufficient artistic merit to have made a name. Caen manufactured Blonde lace in imitation of Chantilly. In Normandy the peasant women and girls in the eighteenth century were specially diligent, and made praiseworthy imitations of Mechlin, Flemish guipure laces, and Brussels, and also introduced the working of gold and silver thread and even beads, which was much used in churches. Some really exquisite Blonde lace made in this manner was produced at Caen, fine pearls were used in the place of beads, and this lace became extremely popular in England. The Empress Eugénie was particularly fond of it, and in most of the portraits of her at the zenith of her beauty she is seen wearing decorated Blonde lace. It is said that this lace so soon soiled and spoiled in the making that only women having specially dry hands could be employed, and that during the summer months the lace was worked in the open air, and in the winter in rooms specially built over cow-houses, so that the

animals' breath might just sufficiently warm the workers in this smokeless atmosphere. Other towns engaged in lace-making were Havre, Dieppe (the latter town making a lace resembling Valenciennes), Bayeux, which carried on an extensive trade with the Southern Islands; Mexico and Spain taking an inferior and heavy Blonde lace for mantillas.

In Bretagne so dear is lace to the heart of the French peasant woman that every garment is trimmed with lace, often of her own making; and along with the provision of a little "dot" for her daughter she makes pieces of lace for her wedding dress. A curious custom is noted, that the peasant woman often wears this treasured garment only twice, once for her wedding and lastly for her funeral!

VII

THE LACES OF FLANDERS



POINT D'ANGLETERRE.

Period Louis XIV.

(*Author's Collection.*)

VII

THE LACES OF FLANDERS

Early Flemish—Brussels lace—Point d'Angleterre—Cost of real Flanders flax thread—Popularity of Brussels lace —Point Gaze.

WHETHER Italy or Flanders first invented both Needlepoint and Pillow laces will ever remain a moot point. Both countries claim priority, and both appear to have equal right. Italian Needlepoint without doubt evolved itself from the old Greek or Reticella laces, that in turn being a development of "Cutworke" and drawn thread work. Flanders produces her paintings by early artists in which the portraits are adorned with lace as early as the fourteenth century. An altar-piece by Quentin Matys, dated 1495, shows a girl making Pillow lace, and later, in 1581, an old engraving shows another girl busy with her pillow and bobbins. An early Flemish poet thus rhapsodises over his countrywomen's handiworks:

"Of many arts, one surpasses all;
The threads woven by the strange power of the hand—

Threads, which the dropping of the spider would in vain attempt to imitate,
And which Pallas herself would confess she had never known."

Whether Flanders imitated the Italian laces or not, it is unquestioned that every other lace-making country imitated *her*. Germany, Sweden, France, Russia, and England have, one after the other, adopted her method to such an extent that, following the tactics of Venice in 1698, she also issued an edict threatening punishment to all who would entice her workers away.

So alike are the early laces of Flanders that it is impossible to distinguish what is known as Flemish Point, Brussels Point, and Point d'Angleterre. The last-named lace is peculiar, inasmuch as it has a French appellation, is named "English," and yet is purely Brussels in character. Two stories gather round this lace, which accounts for its name. One is that the English Government in the time of Charles II., seeing so much money go out of the country, forbade the importation of Brussels lace. The English lace merchants, not to be done out of their immense profits, smuggled it over in large quantities, and produced it as having been made in Devonshire, and sold it under the name of English Point. Another legend is that when Colbert, in the reign of Louis XIV., determined to encourage lace-making in his own country, made prohibitive the importation of any other lace than France's own manufacture, the French Court, which had already become enamoured of Brussels lace, therefore had it smuggled into

POINT D'ANGLETERRE.

Period of Louis XIV.

(*Author's Collection.*)

England and thence to France, as *English laces* were at that time too insignificant to come under Colbert's ban.

Whichever tale we choose to believe is of little consequence. It is sufficient to say that fine Point d'Angleterre is simply Brussels of the best period when the glorious Renaissance was at its height. It is absolutely indistinguishable from Brussels of the same period. The specimen lappet, illustrated, shows the "figure" motif which appears in "Point de France" and the old "Venetian Point," and which at once dates its manufacture.

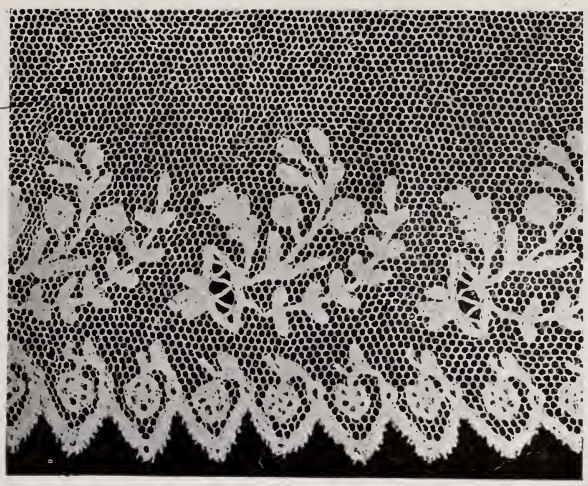
Practically the term Flanders or Flemish lace can be applied to all the laces made in Flanders and Belgium of the earliest periods. It is peculiarly fine; the specimen shown is as fine as gossamer, showing a total absence of Cordonnet, of course, and not even having the loose thread which marks the stems and leaves of Brussels and Angleterre. The flax of Flanders was at the time of the great lace industry known and imported to all the towns engaged in making it. Italy could procure nothing so fine and eminently suitable to the delicate work she made her own as this fine thread, grown in Flanders, and spun in dark, damp rooms, where only a single ray of light was allowed to enter. The thread was so fine, it is said, that it was imperceptible to the naked eye and was manipulated by touch only. The cost of this thread was £240 a pound, and one pound could be made into lace worth £720! Real Flanders lace thread even now, spun with the help of machinery, costs £70, and is nothing like so durable as the old

threads. When we consider that lace to be known as "Old Lace" must be two hundred or three hundred years old, we can understand the strength of this fairy thread, which was like a spider's web in filminess and yet durable enough to last centuries of wear, and remain as a lasting memorial of its beauty.

BRUSSELS

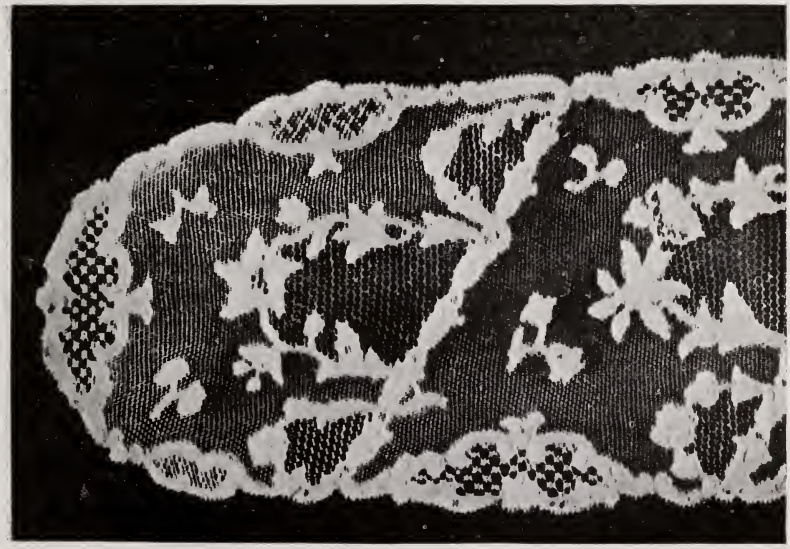
The early Flemish laces cannot be traced to any particular town, but Brussels early obtained a reputation for the production of the soft, elegant laces which are variously known as "Real old Brussels," "Point d'Angleterre," "Point d'Aiguille," and "Point de Gaze." Almost every woman, although knowing little about lace as an art, knows and easily recognises "Brussels." It has ever been the most popular lace, partly because its price has never been actually prohibitive, although always costly. Choice pieces of Old Brussels, with real ground, rank among the laces of France and Venice as pieces of price, but the later period, especially the kind known as Brussels applique, is within everybody's reach, even if only as a border for a best handkerchief.

Lace made at Brussels at all periods has one characteristic that places it at once and makes identification easy at a glance. The threads of the toilé—that is, the pattern—follows the *curves*, instead of, as in other Flanders laces, being straight *up* and *down* and *across*, each thread being exactly at right angles to the other; Brussels lace also has a distinctive edge to its pattern. It has no Cordonnet,



"OLD BRUSSELS" (HAND-MADE GROUND).

(*Author's Collection.*)



BRUSSELS LAPPET, MADE IN IMITATION OF ALENÇON AND ARGENTAN.

but a little set of looped stitches worked along the edge of the design, afterwards whipped over to keep the edge in place. This is most clearly seen in every specimen, and, in conjunction with the curved toilé, at once settles the vexed question of the origin of Point d'Angleterre.

The mesh or ground is, again, quite different to other laces. It has three varieties of ground—

1. One, mostly used in Point d'Angleterre, being of fine "brides" with four or five picots, but this ground is also seen in Venetian and French laces.

2. A hand-made ground made of looped button-hole stitches, which is the finest and most gossamer-like of all; and

3. A woven ground made on the pillow with plaited thread, very like Mechlin, but under the magnifying glass having two longer sides to its hexagonal mesh, and therefore being more open and clear.

The hand, or rather needlepoint, ground was three times more expensive than the woven, as it was stronger and more lasting. The special value of the "vrai reseau" in our own day is that it can be imperceptibly repaired, the broken stitches replaced, whereas in the woven ground the point of junction must show.

The needle-made net is so fine that one piece in my possession, though measuring $\frac{3}{4}$ yard by 8 inches can easily, in its widest part, be gathered and passed through a finger ring. At the present day this net is not made, and even the fine woven ground is not used except for Royal wedding orders or for exhibition purposes. A magnificent piece belonging

to Messrs. Haywards, of New Bond Street (which cannot be photographed, unfortunately, as it is between two sheets of glass, and might fall to pieces if taken out), was made for George IV., and not delivered, owing no doubt to the usual depleted state of that monarch's exchequer. Messrs. Haywards (whose courtesy is as boundless as their reputation) are always pleased to show this and their other splendid specimen collections to those interested in old lace.

Perhaps no lace is so diversified in style as Brussels. At first it was purely Flemish, and almost indistinguishable from it. Then the Venetian influence crept in, and elaboration of pattern and the Renaissance scrolls and flower work showed itself. At the Louis Quatorze period the introduction of the "fairy people," seen at its finest and best in Point de France, marks a time of special beauty. Afterwards the influence of Alençon was shown (though it never rivalled the exquisite lace of this factory), and from that time to the present day these designs have remained for use in its best work.

Some of the choicest specimens of old Brussels are shown in the now discarded "lappets," which when a lace head-piece and lappets were part of every gentlewoman's costume, were actually regulated by Sumptuary Laws as to length. The longer the lappets the higher the rank.

The great Napoleon, while reviving the lace-making of Alençon, specially admired fine old Brussels, and at the birth of his only son, the little "King of Rome," ordered a christening garment

BRUSSELS LAPPET.

Eighteenth Century.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

covered with the Napoleonic "N's," crowns and cherubs. This was sold in 1903 at Christie's for £120. At the same sale a Court train realised £140.

In the "Creevy Papers, 1768–1838," mention is made of Lord Charles Somerset complaining of not having slept all night, "not having had a minute's peace through sleeping in 'Cambrik sheets,' the Brussels lace with which the pillows were trimmed tickling his face"! This occurred at Wynyards, the seat of the Earl of Londonderry.

Queen Anne followed the extravagant fashion of wearing the costliest laces which William III. and Queen Mary carried to such an excess. In 1710 she paid £151 for 21 yards of fine Brussels edging, and two years later the account for Brussels and Mechlin laces amounted to £1,418.

In the succeeding reign the ladies of George I.'s period wore lappets and flounces, caps, tuckers, aprons, stomachers, and handkerchiefs, all made of Brussels.

In the time of George II. lace was even more worn, but English lace began to rival Brussels, not in quality, but as a substitute.

George III. and his wife, Queen Charlotte, were economists of the first order, and personal decoration was rigidly tabooed ; hence the almost total extinction of lace as an article of apparel, while in George IV.'s time dress had evolved itself into shimmery silks and lawns, lace being merely a trimming, and the enormous head-dress decorated more frequently with a band of ribbon.

An exquisite portrait of Louis Philippe's Queen, Marie Amelia, by the early Victorian painter Winterhalter (whose paintings are again by the revival of fashion coming into favour) shows this fine old *grande dame* in black velvet dress covered with three graduated flounces of Brussels lace, cap and lappets and "tucker" of the same lace, lace fan, and, sad to relate, a scarf of English machine-made net, worked with English run embroidery!

Although good Queen Adelaide had a pretty fancy for lace, she wore little of it, and it was left to Queen Victoria to revive the glory of wearing Brussels to any extent; and she, alas! was sufficiently patriotic to encourage home-made products by wearing almost exclusively Honiton, which I personally am not good Englishwoman enough to admire except at its latest stage (just the past few years), when lace-making, as almost every other art work in this country, is emerging from what, from an artistic point of view, has been one long Slough of Despond.

COMTESSE D'ARTOIS, WIFE OF ONE OF LOUIS XIV.'S GRANDSONS, WEARING FINE BRUSSELS LACE.

VIII

THE MODERN BRUSSELS LACES AND MECHLIN

AN OLD PRINT OF "MARIE ANTOINETTE," SHOWING THE SIMPLICITY OF ADORNMENT SHE AFFECTED.

"MECHLIN" LACE.

VIII

THE MODERN BRUSSELS LACES AND MECHLIN

Modern Brussels, Point Gaze—Ghent—Duchesse Point—Mechlin (the Queen of Laces).

MAGNIFICENT laces are still made at Brussels, but almost wholly on a machine-made ground, the workers and merchants apparently finding the old hand-made ground unprofitable. The machine-made ground is cheap, and often of mixed flax and cotton instead of being of purely Flanders flax thread, as in the old days. Both quality and colour suffer from this admixture, the lace washing badly and wearing worse.

The most common lace is the Point Applique, in which the sprays, groups, and borders on the design are made separately by hand on the pillow, and are afterwards applied by tiny stitchings to the machine-made net. Some qualities are better than others. In the better class the sprays are appliqued to the net, which is then cut away and the interstices of the design filled in with hand-made modes and

brides, making a very pretty and showy lace. The best lace made in Brussels now is

Point Gaze,

in which the finest modern lace is produced. Its chief characteristics are its superb designs, repeating many of the fine Renaissance patterns, its clear ground, and its use of shading in leaves and flowers, which, while it adds much to the sumptuous effect, is possibly too naturalistic. This lace is a mixture of hand and machine lace, the ground being of the best machine net, the flowers and sprays frequently needle made, the various fillings being composed of a variety of designs, and the shading often being produced in the needle-darning as in modern Ghent and Limerick. Point de Gaze is costly, but it has the reputation of appearing "worth its money" to which few other laces of the present day can aspire.

Other lace-making towns in Belgium and Flanders are—

Ghent,

which produces a fine machine-made net, worked and embroidered in exact imitation of the earliest Limerick lace. So *real* is this imitation that a fine flounce of 4 yds. 32 in. wide was sold at a London auction-room a few months ago, as "real old Limerick," for £60!

Ghent executes vast quantities of hand-made imitations of Valenciennes, a good and durable lace, but much more expensive than the machine-made varieties which flood the shops as "real Val."

MECHLIN LAPPET.

Eighteenth Century.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

Perhaps the only other lace worth mentioning in smaller and later varieties is that known as "Duchesse point" of "Bruges," which while being a showy, decorative, and cheap lace, is anything but satisfactory either in design, manufacture, or wear. It is largely composed of cotton, is heavy and cumbrous in design, and after washing becomes thick and clumsy. It is pillow-made, the flowers being made on the cushion and afterwards united by coarse and few brides.

Almost equal in favour with old Brussels lace was

MECHLIN,

which was aptly termed "the Queen of Laces." Old Mechlin was wondrously fine, and transparent. It is often spoken of as "Point de Malines" which, of course, is entirely wrong, as it is not Point at all—being made entirely, all at one time, or in one piece, on the pillow. Much of the lace known under the general name of Flemish Point is really Malines or Mechlin, the only difference being the fine silvery thread which runs all through the designs of real Mechlin. The earliest date of the manufacture of Mechlin is unknown, but in 1681, it is recorded, that the people of Malines busied themselves with making a white lace known as Mechlin. It became a fashionable lace in England in 1699, Queen Mary using it considerably and Queen Anne buying it largely, in one instance purchasing 83 yards of it for £247.

It has always remained a favourite lace with

English royalties, Queen Charlotte almost exclusively using it. The other day I discovered in a bric-à-brac shop about twenty yards of it, old and discoloured, it is true, which came directly from Queen Caroline, the ill-used wife of George IV. In the earlier Mechlin, although pillow-made, the introduction of the "brides with picots," and also the may-flower patterns of Brussels, helped to make it more decorative. The ground or réseau was very similar to Brussels hand-made, but the hexagonal mesh is shorter, as reference to the diagram of réseaux will show.

The exquisite "lightness" of Mechlin, so specially adapted to "quillings" and "pleatings," accounted for its popularity. It was specially suitable to the lawns and muslins of the eighteenth century, but little of this lace is left owing, no doubt, to its great favour except the ubiquitous "lappets," for which it was no doubt "the Queen of Lace."

The immediate cause of its extinction was the introduction of Blonde laces, and later its final overthrow came from its being the easiest lace to reproduce by machinery.

MARIE ANTOINETTE, QUEEN OF LOUIS XVI., SHOWING HOW MECHLIN LACE WAS USED.

From an old fashion plate.

IX

OTHER CONTINENTAL LACES

IX

OTHER CONTINENTAL LACES

Spanish lace; Gold and silver laces of Spain—German laces —Russian laces—Maltese silk and thread laces.

OUTSIDE the great lace-making countries of Italy, France, and Flanders, little lace was ever made, and that little of less consequence.

Spanish Lace.

Much of the old lace known as "Spanish Point" is not Spanish at all, but the best of Italian Rose Point on a large scale, being the variety known as Gros Point. It was not extensively used for dress purposes, as contemporary portraits show, but Spain being such an ultra-Romanist country, vast quantities of it were imported into Spain for church use. When Spain fell on unhappy days, in 1830, and the religious houses were dissolved, this lace was eagerly bought by connoisseurs and collectors and became known as Spanish Point. It is not unlikely that the Italian lace was copied by the nuns of the Spanish convents; indeed, at South Kensington

Museum there is a set of church altar lace which is admittedly Spanish work and is a distinct but far off imitation of Italian Point.

Spain made gold and silver laces of fine quality and gorgeous design. Blonde laces in both cream and black are almost indigenous to the soil, and a particular kind of black Blonde, embroidered with colours, specially appealed to the colour-loving people.

German Laces.

Perhaps at the present day more lace is made in Germany than at any other period. An enormous manufacture of good machine-made lace is exported yearly, the variety known as Saxony being both popular and cheap.

Germany has no national lace, the clever *haus-fraus* caring more to decorate their table and bed-linen than their persons, and using the substantial and practical embroideries of the cross-stitch patterns more than the elegant frailties of lace trimming. Lacis network darned into patterns has always been popular here, as also in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

Russia.

The Russian laces need little more than a passing note. As in Germany, Lacis and Cutworke form the only hand-made lace known, the people contenting themselves with these varieties and using coloured threads to further decorate them. Their laces may be called merely Russian embroideries. Peter the Great did much to found a lace school,

DUCHESSE LACE.

Modern.

but only gold laces were made, of a barbaric character. Recently an attempt has been made to imitate the Venetian laces, with very fair results, but the character is very stiff and mechanical, going back to the primitive forms of Reticella rather than the elegancies of Italian Point.

The only other Continental lace requiring note is

Maltese,

a lace made entirely with bobbins and on a pillow. This lace is of ancient make, being known as early as the old Greek laces, which it strongly resembles. Its very popularity has killed its use as a fine lace, and at the present day it is copied as a cheap useful lace in France, England, Ireland, and even India. The old Maltese lace was made of the finest flax thread, afterwards a silk variety, which is well known, being made in cream. Black lace was also manufactured, and at the time of the popularity of black lace as a dress trimming it was much used. At the present day the lace is not of the old quality, cotton being frequently mixed with the flax threads. There is no demand for it, and it is about the most unsaleable lace of the day.

X

A SHORT HISTORY OF LACE IN ENGLAND

QUEEN ELIZABETH : RUFF OF VENETIAN POINT.

(*National Portrait Gallery.*)

X

A SHORT HISTORY OF LACE IN ENGLAND

Early samplers—Lace worn by Queen Elizabeth; by the early Stuarts—Extravagant use of lace in time of Charles II.—William and Mary's lace bill.

EVEN at the risk of being considered utterly unpatriotic, I cannot give much more than faint praise to the lace-making of England up to the present date, when notable efforts are at last being made to raise the poor imitation of the Continental schools to something more in accordance with artistic conception of what a great National Art might become.

As in all countries, lace-making apparently commenced in its early English stages by drawn-thread and cutwork. In many of the charming old sixteenth-century English samplers just as exquisite cut-work, and its natural successor Reticella, or "punto in aria" is shown, as in the finest examples of the Venetian schools. Unfortunately, however, English fine lace-making came to a sudden and inexplicable end, although we know that any quantity

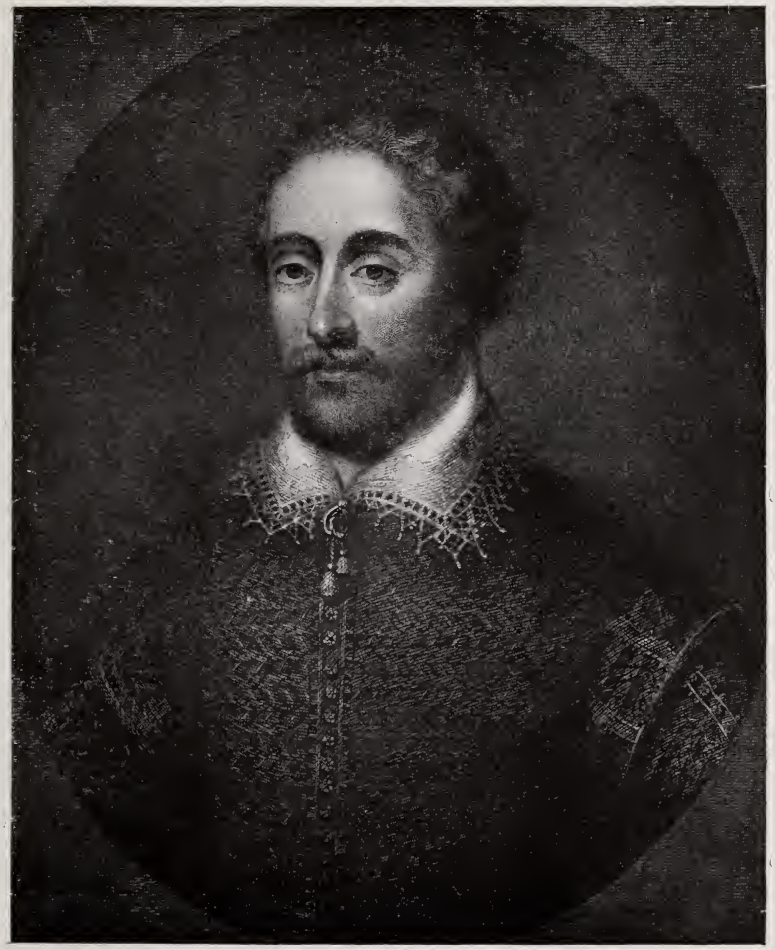
of fine Venetian, exquisite Brussels, or Flemish laces, and the wonderful Point de France were being imported into the country and lavishly used.

As early as the reign of Edward IV. lace was mentioned as being prohibited for importation amongst other items of feminine luxury, such as "ribans, fringes of silk and cotton," but it is considered that the word "laces" here means only the twisted threads that go to make up a lace or tie, commonly ending in tags or points. It must be allowed, however, that laces, or more probably "gimps" of gold and silver threads were used for trimming both lay and ecclesiastical garments, and in Henry VII.'s reign we find that importation of Venetian lace was permitted, but this is generally admitted still to refer to gold and silver lace, more probably coming from Genoa.

It was not really until the time of bluff King Hal that lace became an article of fashion, when during the life of the last of his unfortunate queens he permits "the importation of all manner of gold and silver fringes, or *otherwise*, with all new 'gentillesses' of what facyion or value, for the pleasure of our dearest wyeff the Queen."

Henry himself also began to indulge in all these little elegances of fashion, and wore his sleeves embroidered with cutwork, and handkerchiefs edged with gold and silver, treating himself liberally to "coverpanes" and "shaving-cloths" trimmed with gold lace.

Little mention of white work was made in the inventories of Henry VIII. or his Queens, but Car-



EDMUND SPENSER: COLLAR TRIMMED WITH RETICELLA.

Early period.

dinal Wolsey seems to have had more than his share of cutwork embroideries, judging from contemporary portraits.

In Queen Mary's reign white work began to be more frequently spoken of, and in 1556 it is stated that Lady Jane Seymour presented the Queen with "a smock of fair white work, Flanders making."

It was not until Queen Elizabeth's time that lace became freely mentioned; then suddenly we are introduced to an endless variety of lace and trimmings, both of gold and silver, pearl and embroideries, and various white work! In some of the old Chronicles mention was made of drawn work, cut-work, Crown lace, bone lace for ruffs, Spanish chain, parchment, hollow, and diamond lace. Many of these terms cannot be understood.

The enormous ruffs worn by Queen Elizabeth were introduced into England in the time of her sister Mary. Portraits both of Philip of Spain and Queen Mary show ruffs, but not edged with lace. Queen Elizabeth's, on the contrary, are both edged with lace and, in some instances, covered with it. On her poor old effigy at Westminster Abbey, where her waxen image is dressed in her actual garments, the only lace that appears is on the enormous ruff, three-quarters of a yard wide, covered with a fine lace of the loose network kind. The rest of her garments are trimmed with gold and silver lace and *passementerie.*

In the succeeding reign lace of a geometric design shows itself on the ruffs of the richest people.

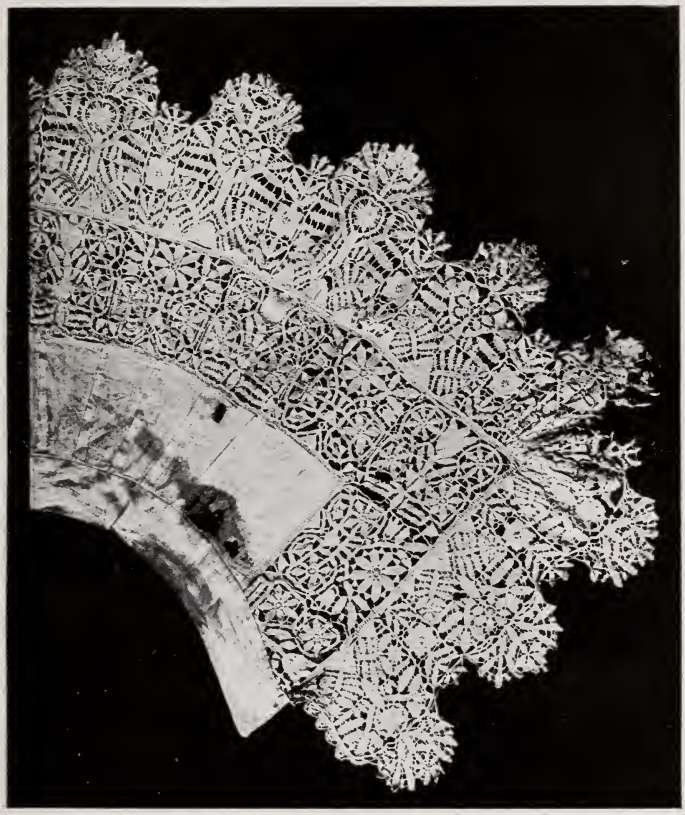
Pictures in the National Portrait Gallery show many exquisite examples of the beautiful Reticella of Venice, which must have been very costly to the purchaser, as twenty-five yards or more of this fine lace were required to edge a ruff.

It was in the reign of James I. and his consort, Anne of Denmark, that Flanders lace and the expensive Point laces of Italy first became widely popular. Then, as now, they were costly—to such an extent that many gentlemen sold an estate to buy laces for their adornment.

It was during this reign that we first learn of a lace being made in England, as Queen Anne of Denmark on her journey south purchased lace at *Winchester* and *Basing*, but history mentions not what kind of lace it was. Apparently only a simple kind of edging was used, made on a pillow.

The enormous ruffs went out of fashion with the death of James I. Charles I., in all his portraits, wears the falling collar edged with Vandyke lace. It was during this reign that Venetian lace reached its apotheosis in England. The dress of the day has never been surpassed, though it became much more elaborate and ostentatious in the time of Charles II. and William and Mary. Falling collars were specially adapted to the display of the handsome laces of Venice. The cuffs of the sleeves were likewise trimmed with the same; scarves were worn across the breast, trimmed with the narrower Reticella.

During the Commonwealth the laces of Venice suffered a temporary eclipse, and the plainer laces



SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FALLING COLLAR TRIMMED WITH FINE RETICELLA.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

of Flanders were freely used. Cromwell himself, it is said, did not disdain the use of it. His effigy at Westminster was dressed in a fine Holland lace-trimmed shirt, with bands and cuffs of the same. This effigy, by the way, was destroyed at the Restoration.

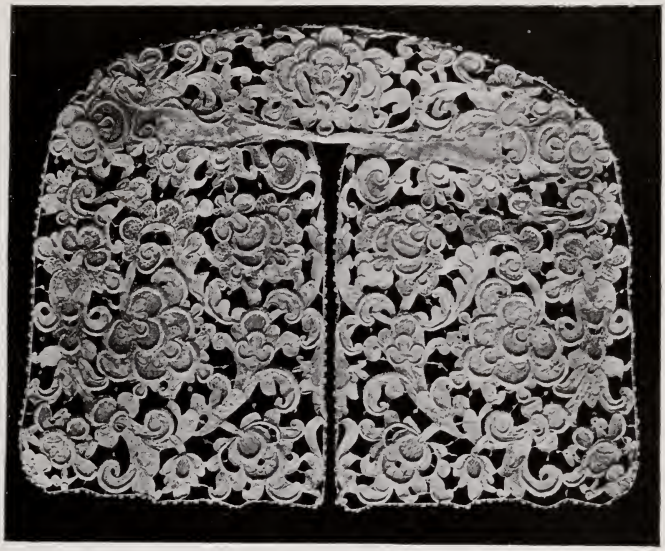
Charles II., who during his exile in France had become imbued with the extravagant taste of the French Court, gave vast orders for "Points of Venice and Flanders," on the plea of providing English lace-workers with better patterns and ideas.

The falling collar certainly went out of fashion, but lace was liberally used on other parts of the dress. Lace frills of costly Point edged the knee-breeches, lace cravats were worn and deep falling cuffs. Charles II., in the last year of his reign, spent £20 for a new cravat for his brother's birth-day.

During James II.'s reign extravagance in lace purchases are still mentioned, but it surely reached its culmination in the joint reign of William and Mary, when enormous sums were spent by both King and Queen. In one year Queen Mary's lace bill amounted to £1,918. New methods of using lace were fashioned. A huge head-dress called the "Fontange," with upright standing ends of Venetian Point, double hanging ruffles falling from elbow sleeves, lace-trimmed aprons, lace tuckers, characterised the feminine dress of the day, while the "Steinkirk" cravat and falling cuffs of William III.'s day ran up accounts not much less than that of his

Queen. In 1690 his bill was £1,603, and in 1695 it amounted to £2,459!

The effigies of William and Mary in the Abbey, wear the very finest Venetian Point laces. None of the other figures wear such costly lace, nor in such profusion.



COLLAR IN GROS POINT DE VENISE.

Louis XIV. period.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

XI

ENGLISH LACES

XI

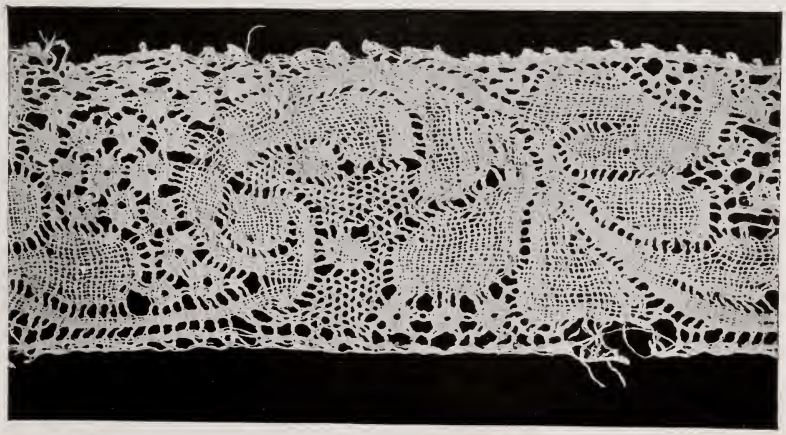
ENGLISH LACES

Queen Anne and Mechlin—Establishment of lace-making in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire—Buckingham lace —Wiltshire lace — Devonshire lace — Modern Honiton revival.

It was in Queen Anne's time that the earliest really good lace manufactured in England appeared. Driven from France by the edict of Louis XIV., the refugees found a home in England, and encouraged by Queen Anne's fondness for laces other than Venetian, they made and taught the English lace-workers, among whom they settled, the art of real lace-making, which up to this time had apparently been only half understood. Numerous lace schools now sprang up, the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northampton specially becoming known. Valenciennes and Mechlin were the varieties of laces principally copied ; a very pretty lace, very reminiscent of Mechlin, being the "Baby lace," which received its name from being so much used to trim babies' caps. Although very much like Valenciennes and Mechlin, the laces were much coarser both in

thread and design than their prototypes. Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire did not long retain the art of lace-making, but Buckingham lace remained a staple manufacture, and is much esteemed even to-day, many connoisseurs considering it far better as a lace than the somewhat clumsy laces of Devonshire. The specimen shown is a piece of old Buckingham lace closely copying the réseau and sprigs of Lille which most lace-lovers consider it excels. The net of Buckinghamshire is an exact copy of the Lille mesh, being made of two threads twisted in a diamond pattern, the sprays being worked on the pillow at the same time. The patterns of the old Buckingham lace are not very varied, the best known being what is called "Spider lace," a coarse kind of open mesh being worked in the pattern. The principal town engaged in the eighteenth century was Newport Pagnel, which was cited as being most noted for making Bobbin lace. Old Brussels designs were used, and some quaint lace of early Flemish design, was made. The early English run lace, which was even so late as fifty years ago very popular, was mostly made here. Aylesbury, Buckingham, and High Wycombe also made lace, and in the last-named old town cottage lace-making may be seen to this day. Very quaint are the old lace bobbins that may be purchased in the "antique" shops of these lace-making towns. The lace-workers apparently indulged many a pretty fancy in shaping them in a diversity of ways, very few bobbins being alike. Some were made of bone, really prettily turned, with dotted

"OLD BUCKINGHAM."
(*Author's Collection.*)



EARLY DEVONSHIRE LACE.
(*Author's Collection.*)

and pierced patterns on them. Others were silver-studded, and again others were banded in silver. The wooden ones were always decorated, if possible, each one differently from the others, so that the worker might distinguish each thread without looking at it. Nearly every bobbin was ended with a bunch of coloured beads strung on wire, and a collection of these bobbins, with their "gingles," often yields up a pretty and quaint necklace. One in my possession has a quaint bead made of "ancient Roman glass," worth at least ten shillings. One wonders how this bit of Roman magnificence had strayed into an English cottage home!

Buckinghamshire is the only one of the Midland counties which has produced *wide* lace; the adjoining counties confined themselves to edgings at most some 6 inches wide. A flounce in my collection measures 21 inches, and is of very elegant design, and of fine quality. In Wiltshire lace appears to have been made at an early date in the eighteenth century, but little lace is left to show its quality. A curious piece is said to belong to an old family in Dorset, who vouch for the lace having belonged to Queen Charlotte, the wife of George III. Like many other traditional "antiques," this is undoubtedly a fairy story, as it claims to have been made in commemoration of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, *at contemporary times.* It is exceedingly handsome, showing one of Philip's ships, very suggestively surrounded by big sea fish and apparently resting on the

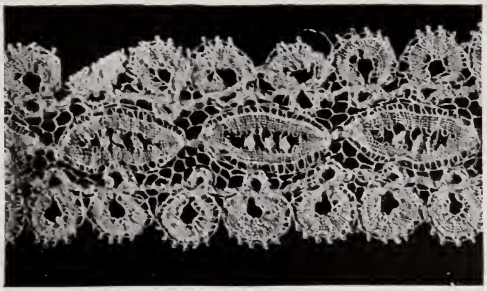
rocky bottom of the ocean. In the next panel Tilbury Fort is portrayed, and another ship, one of England's glory, proudly rules the waves. The design is undoubtedly English, and most probably it was made in commemoration of the historic event —but the lace is Point d'Argentan, and was most likely manufactured specially for Queen Charlotte.

Lyme Regis at one time rivalled Honiton, the laces of both towns being equally prized. Queen Charlotte wore a "head and lappets" made here when she first came to England, and afterwards she ordered a splendid lace dress to be made. When, however, Queen Victoria, in her wish to encourage the English makers, sent an order for her marriage lace, not sufficient workers were found to produce it.

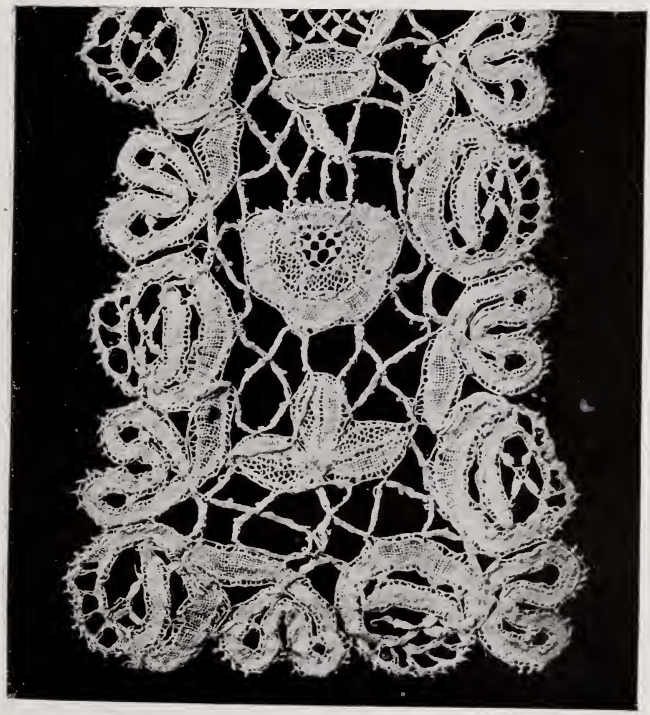
DEVONSHIRE LACE.

As early as 1614 the lace-makers of Devonshire were known. The influx of refugees from Flanders in the Midlands and southern counties undoubtedly established lace-making in both parts of the kingdom. Many of the Honiton lace-workers married these refugees, and to this day the people are of mixed descent. Quaint names of Flemish extraction appear over the shop doors.

In the early days both men, women, and children seem to have pursued the art of lace-making, boys learning and working at it until the age of sixteen, when they were either apprenticed to some trade or went to sea.



OLD HONITON (NEEDLEPOINT GROUND).



OLD HONITON.

(*Author's Collection.*)

Most of the old Devonshire laces bear distinct likeness to the fine Flemish lace, only the clumsiness of the design or the coarse workmanship differentiating them. It has, however, one special feature which gave it the name "Trolly lace," as, unlike the perfectly flat lace of Flanders, it has a coarse thread or "trolly" outlining its patterns, and being made of English thread, it was coarse and not very durable.

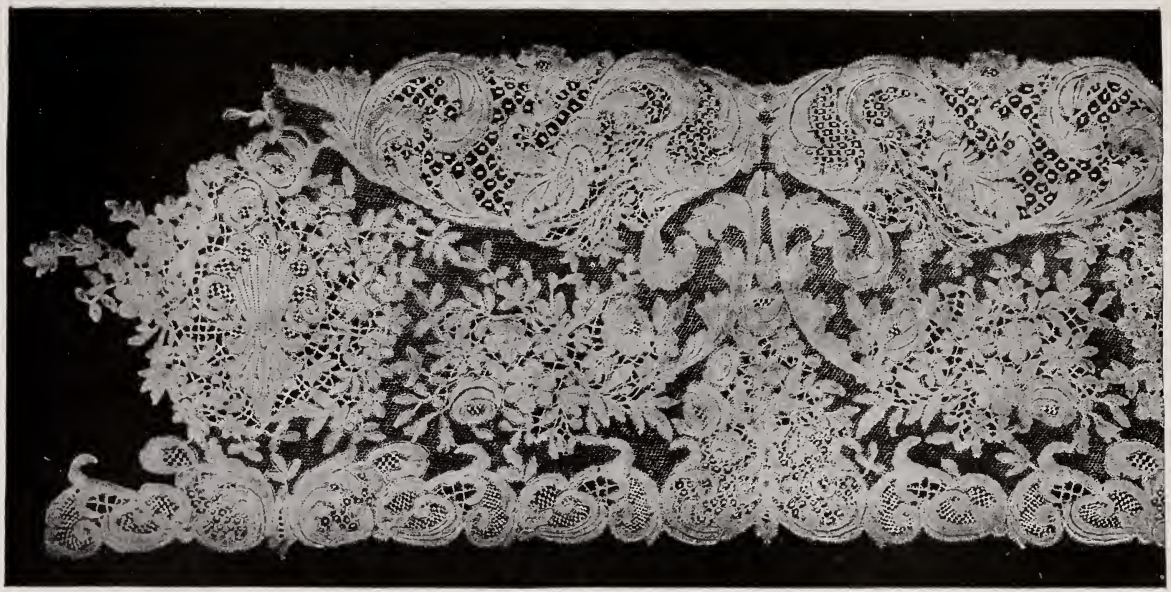
Honiton

has always easily ranked first amongst our British laces, although by many not considered equal to fine Bucks. Like the Midland lace, it has been always made with Flanders thread, and therefore has maintained its popularity because of its *wear* and its *colour*. The early Honiton workers copied "Brussels" lace, but because of their inability to produce an artistic design it has never been anything but a *poor* copy. Even when the Brussels influence was most direct the flowers and sprays were placed inartistically, while the scroll copies of the early Flemish schools can only be termed the imitative handiwork of a child.

The most prized specimens of old Honiton are those with hand-made ground, made of Flanders flax. Very little of this real ground Honiton lace is left. Queen Victoria did much to make Honiton lace *the* lace of the land; but although a regular trade has been established, and much good work accomplished, Honiton of the past will never be regarded on the same plane as the laces of Venice, France, and Brussels. Even in its best

variety it lacks the exquisite filmy touch of Brussels, the dainty grace of Alençon, and the magnificence of Point de France and Venetian Point. The Honiton laces made since the introduction of machine-made net is especially poor. Flower sprigs and sprays are made separately on the pillow, and afterwards applied to the machine-made ground. These are, as a rule, flowers and foliage treated naturalistically, and are heavy and close in design. These are often very sparingly applied over a wide expanse of net in order to make as much lace with as little trouble as possible. This is very different to the work of the old Honiton lace-worker, who made every inch of it herself—first the sprays and scrolls, then worked the ground round it, and received, it is said, from the middleman (who purchased it for the town market) as many shillings as would cover the lace offered for sale.

We are glad to say, however, that very praiseworthy efforts are being made to introduce better methods and more artistic designs in the many lace schools which are being formed in various parts of Devon. Mrs. Fowler, of Honiton, one of the oldest lace-makers in this centre, making exquisite lace, the technique leaving nothing to be desired, and also showing praiseworthy effort in shaking off the trammels of the traditional designs.



MODERN HONITON, MADE BY MRS. FOWLER.

XII

SCOTCH AND IRISH LACES

XII

SCOTCH AND IRISH LACES

Hamilton lace—Mary Queen of Scots—Modern lace-making in Ireland — Limerick lace — Carrick-ma-cross — Irish crotchet—Convent laces.

SCOTCH lace can hardly be said to exist. At one time a coarse kind of network lace called "Hamilton lace" was made, and considerable money was obtained by it, but it never had a fashion, and deservedly so. Since the introduction of machinery, however, there has been considerable trade, and a tambour lace is made for flounces, scarfs, &c. The more artistic class of work made by Scotswomen is that of embroidering fine muslin, and some really exquisite work is made by the common people in their homes.

Much mention is often made of Mary Queen of Scots and her embroideries and laces. It must be remembered that she married firstly the Dauphin of France, and while at the French Court imbibed the taste for elegant apparel and costly lace trimmings. There is no record that she ever wore lace of her own country's manufacture, and, although English writers

often quote the lace made by her fair hands, really the needlework made by Queen Mary at Fotheringay was embroidery.

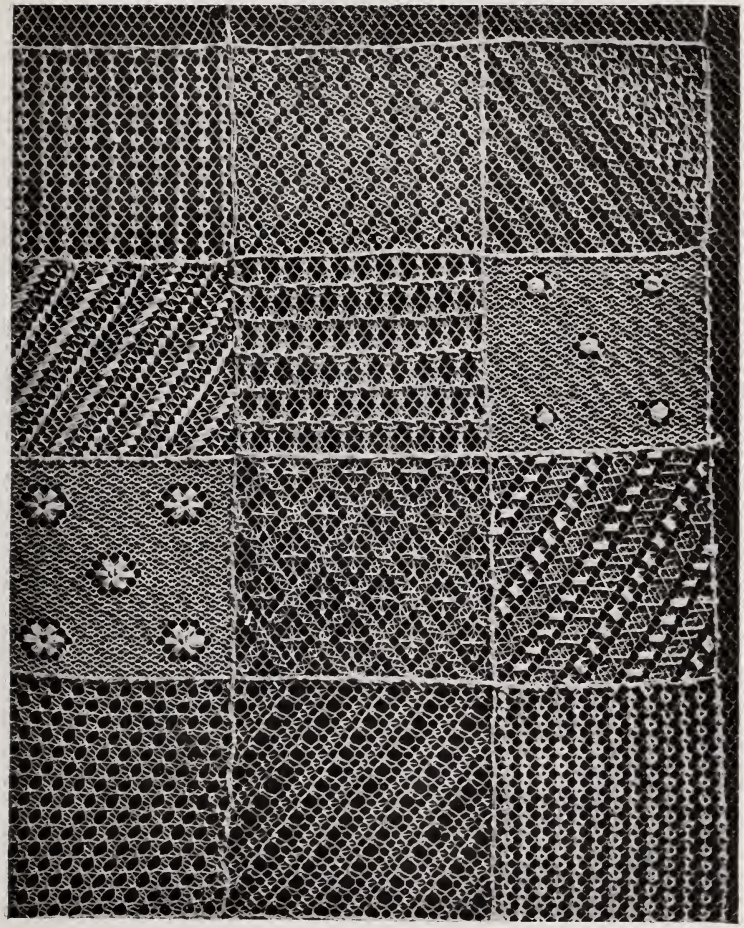
Irish Laces.

The early lace of Ireland was the usual cut and drawn work, and it was not until the earlier part of the nineteenth century that lace-making actually became a craft. In the eighteenth century many brave attempts were made to commence lace schools, and the best work was done in the convents, where really fine work was executed by the nuns, the patterns having been sent from Italy. It was not until 1829 that the manufacture of Limerick lace was first instituted. This really is not lace at all, as it is merely chain-stitch worked in patterns on machine-made net.

This pretty so-called lace was first made at Limerick by an Oxford man, who established a school there, taking with him twenty-four girls as teachers. It quickly became very popular, in the early "fifties" every woman of either high or low degree possessing herself of at least a lace collar or fichu of Limerick lace.

In 1855 more than 1,500 workers were employed, but decidedly the best lace of the manufacture belongs to the time prior to this date. The quality of the net ground has also deteriorated, or perhaps the best net has not been purchased.

Very dainty little sprays and flowers are produced in the fine chain or tambour stitch, the hearts of the flowers or the centres of the scallops being worked



LIMERICK "FILLINGS."

over in an endless variety of extra stitches, as will be seen in the illustration.

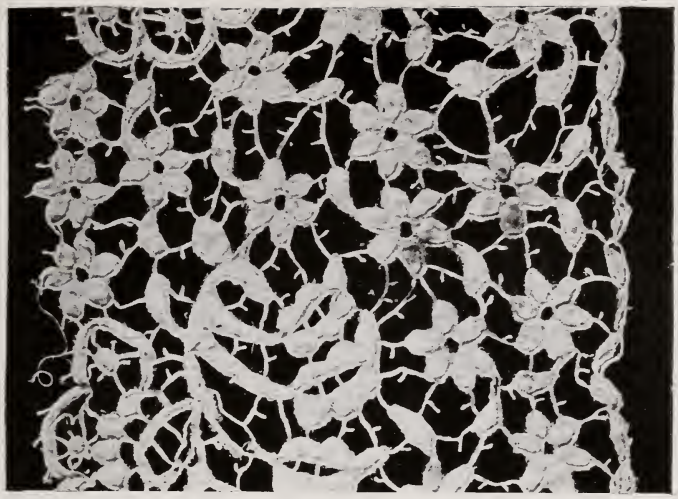
Another variety of lace is Carrick-ma-cross, which was contemporary with Limerick. This is merely embroidery again, but has more claim to the title of lace, as the tiny little flowers and scrolls are connected with brides made of buttonhole stitch ornamented with picots. This is really a very handsome lace, its only drawback being that it will not *wash*. The fine lawn of which it is made is buttonholed round and then cut away. This, in cleaning or washing, *contracts* and leaves the buttonhole edging, and in a few cleanings it is a mass of unmendable rags.

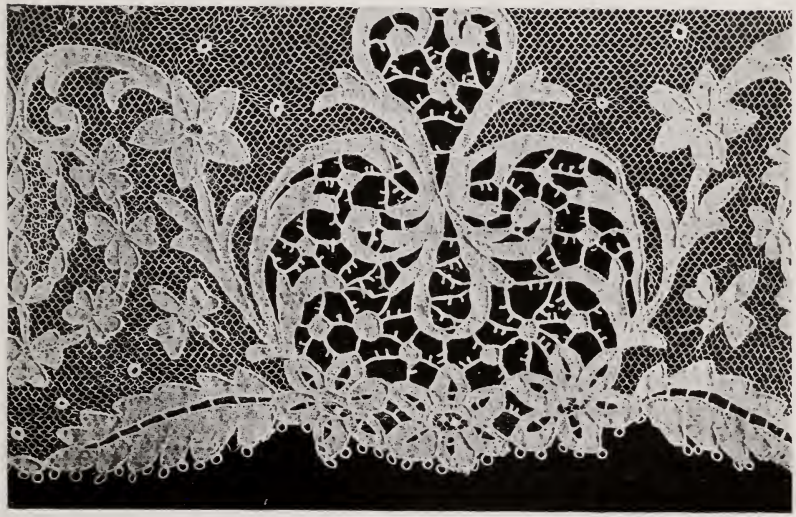
Slightly more serviceable is another variety of Carrick-ma-cross, on which the lawn is appliquéd to a machine-made net, the pattern outlined with buttonhole stitches, and the surplus lawn cut away, leaving the network as a grounding, various pretty stitchings filling up the necessary spaces.

Yet another kind of lace is made, and is really the only real lace that Ireland can claim. This is the Irish crotchet, which in its finer varieties is a close imitation of Venetian Point, but made with fine thread and with a crotchet needle. Some of the best is really worth purchasing, but it is costly, realising as much as five guineas per yard. A very delicate "Tatting" also comes from the Emerald Isle, and in comparing English and Irish laces one is inevitably struck with the reflection that there is more "artistry" in the production of Irish laces and embroidery than in England with all her advantages.

The temperamental differences of the two races are distinctly shown in this, perhaps more than any other art.

Much really notable work is now being executed in the Irish lace schools. At Youghal, co. Monaghan, an exact replica of old Venetian Point is being worked. Various fine specimens from the school occupy a place at South Kensington Museum, and the lace industry of Ireland may be said to be in a healthy condition.



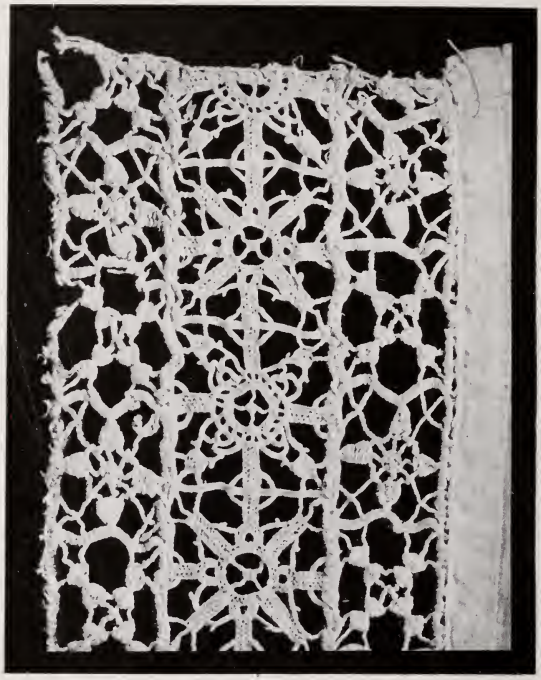


CARRICK-MA-CROSS LACE.

(*Author's Collection.*)

XIII

HOW TO IDENTIFY LACE



THE CENTRE STRIP IS OLD "RETICELLA," WITH GENOA BORDERS.

(*Author's Collection.*)

XIII

HOW TO IDENTIFY LACE

Style—Historical data—Réseaux.

THE great difficulty in attempting to identify any specimen of lace is that from time to time each country experimented in the manners and styles of other lace-making nations. The early Reticella workers copied what is known as the "Greek laces," which were found in the islands of the Grecian Archipelago. Specimens of these laces found in the excavations of the last thirty years show practically no difference in method and style. France copied the Venetian laces, and at one period it is impossible to say whether a given specimen was made at Alençon or Venice. Italy, in turn, imitated the Flemish laces—to such an extent that even the authorities at South Kensington Museum, with all their leisure and opportunities for study and the magnificent specimens at hand for identification, admit that certain laces are either "Italian or Flemish." Valenciennes was once a Flemish town, and though now French, preserves the Flemish

character of lace, some specimens of Mechlin being so like Valenciennes as to baffle certainty.

Later, Brussels borrowed the hand-made grounds of France and Venice, and still later England copied Brussels, the guipures of Flanders, and the ground and style of Lille! All this makes the initial stages of the study of lace almost a hopeless quest. The various expensive volumes on lace, although splendidly written and gorgeously illustrated, leave the student with little more than an interesting and historical knowledge on which to base the actual study of lace. Here I may refer my readers to the one and only public collection of lace, I believe, in England—that of the South Kensington Museum, where specimens of lace from all countries and of all periods are shown, and where many magnificent bequests, that of Mrs. Bolckow especially, make the actual study of lace a possibility.

It is to be hoped that the governing body of the museum will, in its own good time, make this a pleasure instead of a pain. The specimens, the *most important to the student*, are placed in a low, dark corridor. Not a glimmer of light can be obtained on some of the cases, which also are upright, and placed so closely together that on attempting to see the topmost specimen on one side the unfortunate student literally bangs her head into the glass of the next one. A gentle complaint at the Directors' office concerning the difficulty brought forth the astonishing information that there was no room at their disposal, but that in good time better light might be found. As these cases have

POINT D'ANGLETERRE.

Style Louis XV. Eighteenth Century

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

been in identically the same place for the past fifteen years, one hopes that the "good time" may come before one becomes a "spectacled pantaloon" with no desire to see the wonders of that Palace of Art.

This little protest is made in the hope that the "Lords of the Committee" may possibly have their attention drawn to what amongst the lace-lovers and students in this country is a "standing grievance."

It is almost impossible, even from the best of photographic illustrations, to learn all the intricacies of identification. The photographs clearly show style, but it needs specimens of the actual lace to show method of working. From the illustrations in this book, specially selected from the South Kensington Collection, and from specimens in my own collection, every variety of style may be easily understood, as they have been particularly selected to show each point of difference. Commencing with the earliest form of lacework—*i.e.*, "cutworke"—nothing will better show this than the "Sampler" specimen, which, half way down, shows two rows entirely typical of this kind of early lace-making—for such it is. A little lower, examples of drawn threadwork are seen, while the upper portion illustrates satin stitch patterns, which more properly belong to embroidery.

The ancient collar from the South Kensington Collection, page 149, shows some of the finest developments of cutwork, when the foundation of linen was entirely dispensed with. The work is exceedingly fine, the threads being no coarser, indeed in many cases less so, than the fine linen it adorns.

This is known as Reticella, or "punto in aria." The last name is applicable to all the laces of Venice which succeeded Reticella, and means lace literally made out of nothing or without any building foundation.

The specimen is still of the same class, but where before the design was simple geometric square and pointed as in all the early lace, it now takes on the lovely flowing scroll of the Renaissance that marks the latter half of the seventeenth century.

The same grand styles may be noted all through the great period of Italian Needlepoint lace. It will be seen in a lesser degree in the Guipure laces of Milan and Genoa, but here the cramping influence of the Flemish school shows itself distinctly.

The same bold lines may be noted in the early Needlepoint lace of France, which had not then become sufficiently sure of her capacity to develop a style of her own, and all show the Renaissance spirit. Afterwards when the superb Point de France was at its height of manufacture along with grand outline and exquisite handicraft, the influence of the mighty monarch Louis XIV. asserted itself and although the lace itself commands unbounded admiration, fantastic little notions, symbolical and naturalistic, showed itself—as an illustration page 75: little figures representing "the Indian," "canopied crown over a sealed lady," trees growing all manner of bizarre fruit and flowers, all symbolical of Louis the Magnificent's unbounded power and sway. In the South Kensington Museum there is a still

ITALIAN ECCLESIASTICAL LACE.

FLEMISH OR GENOESE ECCLESIASTICAL LACE.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

finer specimen, which has not yet been photographed, I believe—a magnificent flounce, about eighteen inches wide (really two boot top pieces joined), of what is known as pseudo-Oriental character, which shows amongst the usual exquisite scrolling no less than seven different figures on each piece—viz., an Indian, a violinist in dress of Louis XIV. period, a lady riding on a bird, two other ladies, one with a pet dog and the other a parrot, a lady violinist, and another lady seated before a toilet-table. These little figures are not more than three-quarters of an inch high, but are worked with such minuteness that even the tiny features are shown. This fantastic adoption of the human figure was copied in Italy and Flanders. The finest specimens of Point d'Angleterre (Brussels) show the same designs; and it may broadly be stated that all lace with figures is of the Louis XIV. period, and over two hundred years old.

Succeeding this period came the dainty elegance of the French laces, when the workers of Alençon and Argentan had developed a purely French style. Note the Point d'Alençon, illustration, page 83, where the characteristics of the period are fully shown. The illustration shows a mixed lace, which only recently has been acknowledged by the South Kensington people as Point d'Argentan. Along with the typical Argentan ground of the upper portion is the fine Alençon mesh and varied jours of the border. This also is Louis XIV. style. The lappet shown next is exceedingly instructive, as till quite lately the people who professed to understand lace agreed to call this Genoese, although it was quite unlike anything

else made there. This lappet was so labelled at South Kensington, but now is admittedly Argentella (or little Argentan). It is remarkably like Alençon, being of same period, the only points of difference being that the design is not outlined with a raised Cordonnet (though in different places of the design a raised and purled Cordonnet is often stitched on it) and the special ground (partridge eye) which is agreed to denote "Argentella" lace—page 83. It is sometimes called the may-flower ground, but this is somewhat misleading as that design occurs in other laces. The only other great style is that of Flanders, which at its earliest period had received no influence from the Renaissance that had seized the southern countries of Europe and was still in the grip of mediæval art. It was not until Italian influence permeated France that Flemish lace perceptibly altered in character.

These are to all intents and purposes the three great styles of lace. England had no style: she copied Flemish, Brussels, and Mechlin laces. Ireland, on the contrary, copied Italian in her Irish crotchet and Carrick-ma-cross (in style only, but not workmanship), and adapted Lille and Mechlin and Brussels and Buckingham in her Limerick lace.

The student must next make herself familiar with the methods pursued by the old lace-workers, and here the difficulty commences. All lace is either Needlepoint, pillow-made, or machine-made. *Needlepoint* explains itself. Every thread of it is made with a needle on a parchment pattern, and only two

BRUSSELS LAPPET.

Nineteenth Century.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

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stitches are used, buttonhole and a double-loop which is really a buttonhole stitch.

This can be clearly understood by referring to Charts Nos. I. and II., where the *two Brussels grounds* are shown. The Needlepoint ground, No. I., is formed by a buttonhole stitch, which loops over again before taking the next. The pillow-made ground, No. II., shows the threads plaited or twisted together to form a hexagonal or a diamond-shaped network. This is all the difference between needle-made and pillow-made lace, and in itself helps to identify in many instances its country and period when it was produced. All the early Italian laces were Needlepoint, and all the early French laces were the same. All the Flemish laces (including Brussels) were pillow-made, and mixed laces in any of these countries are of later make. Italy adapted the Flemish pillow-lace, and produced Genoese and Milanese guipures, in addition to the coarse imitation of Reticella which she now made by plaiting threads on the pillow. Brussels adopted the needle-made motifs and grounds of Italy, and produced perhaps her finest lace, weaving her beautiful designs and outlines on the pillow, and afterwards filling the spaces with needle-made jours and brides, as in Point d'Angleterre.

A study of Chart II. will show the different style of grounds or réseaux of both Needlepoint and pillow-made lace, the buttonhole grounds being either of "brides" with or without picots, or buttonhole loops, as in Brussels, and Alençon (with a straight thread whipping across to strengthen the ground),

loops buttonholed over all as in Argentan, or made of tiny worked hexagons with separate buttonholed threads around them as in Argentella. The pillow-made grounds are made of two plaited or twisted threads, except in the case of Valenciennes, when it is made of four threads throughout (hence its durability). In Brussels, it will be noted, the threads are twisted twice to commence the mesh. These meet other two threads, and are plaited four times, dividing into two again, and performing the same twist, the whole making a hexagon rather longer than round. Mechlin has precisely the same ground, only that the threads are plaited *twice* instead of four times, as in Brussels, making the hexagon roundish instead of long.

The ground of Lille lace is of exactly the same shape as Valenciennes, but is composed of two threads twisted loosely twice each side of the diamond, and that of Valenciennes being made of four threads plaited.

With the aid of these little charts, a remembrance of the various styles and a few actual specimens of lace, and *a powerful magnifying glass*, it is not beyond the power of any reader of this little book to become expert in the identification of old lace.

REAL "POINT DE GAZE" (NEEDLE-MADE GROUND).

(*Author's Collection.*)

XIV

SALE PRICES

XIV

SALE PRICES

LACE is such an article of luxury, and, as a rule, only belonging to the wealthiest class, that it seldom or ever comes into the open market. In 1907 two collections were dispersed at Christie's—those of Mrs. Massey-Mainwaring and Mrs. Lewis Hill.

The most costly laces are the Venetian Points, some of the fine Rose Points being priceless. It is so fragile that little of it remains, and the smallest piece is eagerly snapped up by collectors.

In 1904 at Christie's lace sold for the following prices—

	£
A 58-inch length of 24-ins. deep Point de Venise	600
A 4-yards length of Rose Point, 11 inches deep	420

The same year—

	£
4 yards of Point d'Argentan, 25 inches deep	460
44 inches Point d'Alençon, 17 inches deep .	43
2½ yards Point d'Alençon, 14 inches deep .	46

In 1907, March 11, *Massey-Mainwaring Sale* at Christie's—

	SOLD FOR £	s.	d.
1½ yards Venetian Gros Point, 8 inches deep	16	16	0
5 yards length of Reticella, 7½ inches deep	33	12	0
4 short lengths	42	0	0
7 pieces of Point d'Alençon	21	0	0
4 yards narrow Point d'Argentan	15	15	0
3 pairs Point d'Argentan lappets	15	15	0
30 yards narrow Mechlin in odd lengths	21	0	0

April 15th, the *Lewis-Hill Sale* at Christie's:—

	SOLD FOR £	s.	d.
4 yards Venetian Point, 15½ inches deep	68	5	0
4 „ „ „ 8½ „ „	52	10	0
3 yards Spanish Point, 6½ inches deep	73	10	0
An Old Brussels scarf in two pieces	10	10	0
6 yards Brussels applique	23	10	0
A Point Gaze parasol-cover	6	16	0
A Brussels flounce	12	1	6
3 yards Honiton flounce, 17 inches deep	69	6	0
Another similar	69	6	0
6 yards Honiton lace in three pieces	24	3	0
An old lace coverlet	25	4	0
Another ditto	26	5	0
A lace altar-frontal	21	1	0

With the exception of the Honiton flounces, which

sold beyond their market value, all the above pieces were bought by London lace dealers!

The famous collection of the late Mrs. Hailstone was sold in 1909. This lady had for many years been known as a lace collector, and the sale of her effects was eagerly anticipated. The result was extremely interesting to the collectors, as Mrs. Hailstone had collected specimen lengths of almost every known lace. No huge prices obtained, but the sale may be regarded as representative, and the prices quoted as being open-market value.

	£	s.	d.
A set of bed-hangings, forming six curtains, made of Italian lace and linen	40	0	0
A large portière curtain of Italian lacis-work	10	10	0
A Point d'Alençon fichu	30	0	0
„ „ „ cravat end, a pair of sleeves, one odd piece	18	0	0
A pair of Argentan lappets and six yards lace	12	0	0
A panel fine raised Venetian Point, 22 inches wide, 28 inches long	24	0	0
A Berthe, Point de Venise, 1 yard 120 inches, 12 inches deep	25	0	0
A Point de Venise Berthe	36	0	0
A 1 yard 13 inches × 7 inches panel Venetian lace	50	0	0
Two specimen pieces, 3¼ inches, all of Point de Venise à réseau	14	10	0

	£	s.	d.
A Buckinghamshire collar, sleeves, and pieces	5	5	0
A specimen of old Honiton, baby's cap, bodice, and handkerchief . .	3	5	0
An old Honiton baby's robe, said to have belonged to Princess Charlotte	15	10	0
Seven volumes of lace specimens of old and modern lace . . .	35	0	0

In December, 1910, probably the most valuable collection ever placed upon the market was dispersed at Messrs. Christie's. The late Sir William Abdy, Bt., had for many years devoted his time and money to the collection of valuable lace, such as now can only be seen in the great national collections. The prices obtained are significant of the huge sums which must be paid to obtain wearable pieces of valuable lace such as skirt lengths, 3- or 4-yard lengths of deep flouncings, shawls, coverlets, aprons, &c.

	£	s.	d.
A fine Point d'Alençon skirt, 2½ yards, 44 inches deep	160	0	0
A fine Point d'Alençon scarf, 2 yards 9 inches × 10 inches deep . .	72	0	0
A Point d'Argentan Berthe, 9½ inches deep	39	0	0
A Point d'Argentan flounce, 6 yards 30 inches × 5½ inches deep . . .	140	0	0
A Point d'Argentan flounce, 2 yards 26 inches long × 25 inches deep . .	210	0	0
A Point d'Argentan flounce, 3 yards 28 inches long × 24 inches deep . .	310	0	0

	£	s.	d.
A Point d'Argentan flounce, 3 yards 35 inches long × 25 inches deep . .	431	0	0
A Point d'Argentan flounce, 3 yards 16 inches long × 24½ inches deep. .	290	0	0
An Italian gold and thread lace flounce, 4 yards long, 29 inches deep . .	740	0	0
A length of Italian Rose Point, 4 yards 15 inches long, 3 inches deep . .	70	0	0
An old Italian Rose Point flounce, 3 yards 31 inches long, 17½ inches deep.	660	0	0
An old Italian Rose Point square, 31 inches × 34 inches	180	0	0
An old Italian Rose Point flounce, 3 yards 19 inches long, 7½ inches deep	520	0	0
An old Italian Rose Point panel, 34 inches × 9 inches	95	0	0
A Point de Venise lappet à réseau, 46 inches long, 5¼ inches wide . .	22	0	0
Point de Venise trimming, 8 yards long × 4 inches deep	65	0	0
A piece of flat Venetian insertion, 4 yards × 3¾ inches deep . . .	92	0	0
A Rose Point flounce, 4 yards long × 5 inches deep	200	0	0
A Rose Point flounce, 3 yards 31 inches long × 22 inches deep . . .	600	0	0
A Rose Point flounce, 4 yards 7 inches long × 24 inches deep . . .	540	0	0
A Rose Point flounce, 3 yards 32 inches long × 15 inches deep . . .	560	0	0

	£	s.	d.
A Rose Point flounce, 4 yards 11 inches long × 18 inches deep, and a pair of sleeves en suite	650	0	0
A Rose Point flounce, 4 yards 3 inches long × 11½ inches deep . . .	510	0	0
A raised Point de Venise square, 1 yard 24 inches long × 1 yard 6 inches wide	450	0	0
An Old Brussels apron, 41 inches wide, 37 inches deep	145	0	0
A specimen piece of early Valenciennes, 2 yards long × 7 inches deep . .	42	0	0

The following prices have been given by the South Kensington authorities for specimens shown:—

	£	s.	d.
A Venetian Point altar-frontal, 8 × 3 feet	350	0	0
A Venetian chasuble, stole, maniple, and chalice veil	200	0	0
A 2 yards × ⅝ yard Venetian flounce	125	0	0
A Gros Point collar	21	0	0
A Brussels lappet	23	0	0
A drawn-thread jacket . . .	10	10	0
Linen cutwork tunic	20	0	0

EGYPTIAN EMBROIDERY.

Found in a tomb at Thebes.

CHATS ON NEEDLEWORK

I

OLD ENGLISH EMBROIDERY

Needlework pioneer art—Neolithic remains—Earliest known English specimens—Bayeux tapestry.

WHILE the subject of lace-making has been treated as almost cosmopolitan, that of embroidery, in this volume, must be regarded as purely national! I purposely refrain from introducing the embroideries of other countries, other than mentioning the ancient civilisations which shared the initial attempts to decorate garments, hangings, &c. (of which we really know very little), and shall confine myself to the needlework of this country, more especially as it is the one art and craft of which England may be unfeignedly proud. It is assumed that needlecraft was the pioneer art of the whole world, that the early attempts to decorate textiles by embroideries of coloured silks, and the elaborate use of gold and

silver threadwork, first suggested painting, sculpture, and goldsmith's work. Certainly early Egyptian paintings imitated embroideries, and we have good ground for supposing that stained glass was a direct copy of the old ecclesiastical figures or ancient church vestments. The Neolithic remains found in Britain show that at a very early period the art of making linen-cloth was understood. Fragments of cloth, both of linen and wool, have been discovered in a British barrow in Yorkshire, and early bone needles found at different parts of the country are plentiful in our museums. There is no doubt that we owe much of our civilisation to the visit of the Phœnicians, those strange people, who appear to have carried all the arts and crafts of ancient Babylon and Assyria to the wonder isles of the Greek Archipelago, to Egypt, to Southern Spain, and to Cornwall and Devonshire. These people, dwelling on the maritime border of Palestine, were the great traders of their age, and while coming to this country (then in a state of wildest barbarism) for tin left in exchange a knowledge of the arts and appliances of civilisation hitherto not understood. The Roman Invasion (45 B.C.) brought not only knowledge of craftsmanship but also Christianity. St. Augustine, to whom the conversion of the Britains is credited, carried with him a banner embroidered with the image of Christ. After the Romans had left the country, and it had become invaded by the Celts and the Danes, and had again been taken possession of by the Saxons, a period of not only rest but advancement arrived, and we see early in the seventh century the country prosperous

A LENGTH OF THE FAMOUS BAYEUX TAPESTRY.

and settled. Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, wrote a poem in which he speaks of the tapestry-weaving and the embroidery which the women of England occupied their lives.

The earliest specimen of embroidery known to have been executed in England is that of the stole and maniple of St. Cuthbert, which is now treasured at Durham Cathedral. These were worked by Aelfled, the Queen of Edward the Elder, Alfred the Great's son. She worked them for Bishop Fridhestan in 905 A.D. Her son Athelstan, after her death, visited the shrine of St. Cuthbert, at Chester-le-street, and in an inventory of the rich gifts which he left there, there is recorded "one stole with a maniple," amongst other articles. These very embroideries were removed from the actual body of St. Cuthbert in 1827. They are described by an eye-witness as boing "of woven gold, with spaces left vacant for needlework embroideries." Exquisitely embroidered figures are in niches or clouds. The whole effect is described as being that of a fine illuminated MS. of the ninth century, and indescribably beautiful. Another great prelate, St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, designed embroideries for the execution of pious ladies of his diocese (924 A.D.).

Emma, Queen of Ethelred the Unready, and afterwards of Canute, designed and embroidered many church vestments and altar-cloths, and Editha, wife of Edward the Confessor, embroidered the King's coronation mantle.

The great and monumental Bayeux tapestry—

which is miscalled, as it is *embroidery*—was the work of Queen Matilda, who, like Penelope, wove the mighty deeds of her husband and king in an immense embroidery. This piece of needlecraft comes upon us as a shock, rather than an admiration, after the exquisite embroideries worked by and for the Church. It is interesting, however, as a valuable historic "document," showing the manners and customs of the time. The canvas is 227 feet long and 20 inches wide, and shows events of English history from the accession of Edward the Confessor to the defeat of Harold, at Hastings. It is extremely crude; no attempt is made at shading, the figures being worked in flat stitch in coloured wools, on linen canvas. Certainly it is one of the quaintest and most primitive attempts of working pictures by needlecraft.

The evidence of the costumes, the armour, &c., are supposed to tell us that this tapestry was worked many years after the Conquest, but it can be traced by documentary evidence as having been seen in Bayeux Cathedral as far back as 1476. In the time of Napoleon I. it was removed from the cathedral and was actually used as a covering for a transport waggon. Finally, however, it was exhibited in the Musée Napoleon, in 1803, and was afterwards returned to Bayeux. In 1840 it was restored and relined, and is now in the Hôtel de Ville at Bayeux!

KING HAROLD.

(*From the Bayeux Tapestry.*)

II

THE GREAT PERIOD OF EMBROIDERY

II

THE GREAT PERIOD OF EMBROIDERY

"Opus Anglicanum"—The Worcester fragments—St. Benedict —Legend of Pope Innocent—The "Jesse" cope—The "Syon" cope.

THE great period of English embroidery is supposed to have been from the twelfth to the thirteenth century. Very little remains to show this, except a few fragments of vestments from the tombs of the bishops dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and other data obtained from various foreign inventories of later date referring to the use of "Opus Anglicanum." Some portion of the Worcester fragments may be seen in the South Kensington Museum, and can only be described as being so perfect in workmanship, colour, and style as even at this day to be more like a magnificent piece of goldsmith's work than that of needlecraft. The background is apparently one mass of thread of fine gold worked in and out of a silken mesh, the embroidery appearing just as clear and neat in manipulation as an illumination. The coloured photographs, which may be seen in the same room,

of the stole and maniple of St. Cuthbert are of precisely the same work. Judging from these, and the embroidered orphrey which the authorities bought from the Hockon Collection for £119 1s. 10d. and which is only 4 feet 8 inches long, there is no doubt that this was, *par excellence*, the finest period. The work can only be described as being like an old Italian painting on a golden ground. We see precisely such design and colouring in ancient paintings for altars as in the old Italian Triptychs. This style was carried out as literally as possible. Even the defects, if so they may be called, are there, and a slight topheaviness of the figures serves but to accentuate the likeness.

There is a legend that during the times of the Danish incursions St. Benedict travelled backwards and forwards through France and Italy, and brought with him during his *seven* journeys artificers in *glass* and *stone*, besides costly books and copies of the Scriptures. The chief end and aim of monastic life, both of monk and nun, in those early days was to embroider, paint, and illuminate their sacred books, vestments, and edifices with what was to them a newly-inspired faith.

Dr. Rock, in his "Church of Our Fathers," says that from the twelfth century to the time of Henry VIII. that only the best materials that could be found in our country or that of other lands were employed, and that the art that was used on them was the best that could be learnt or given. The original fabrics often came from Byzantium or were of Saracenic origin.

FROM THE "JESSE" COPE (*South Kensington Museum*).

English, early Fourteenth Century.

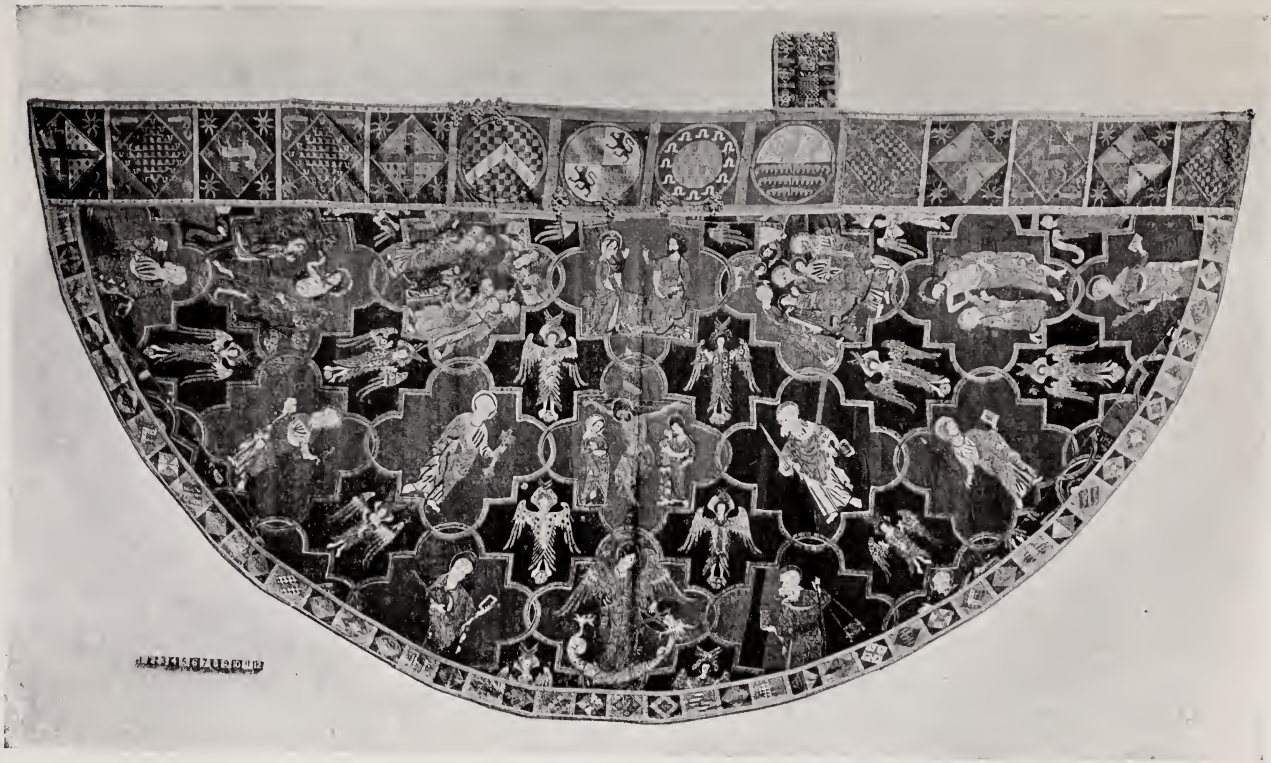
The story of Pope Innocent III., who, seeing certain vestments and orphreys, and being informed that they were English, said, "Surely England must be a garden of delight!" must be quoted to show how English work was appreciated in those early days.

The choicest example in this country of this glorious period of English embroidery is the famous Syon cope, which is supposed to rank as the most magnificent garment belonging to the Church. It may be regarded as a typical example of real English work, the "Opus Anglicanum" or "Anglicum," which, although used for other purposes, such as altar-cloths and altar-frontals, found apparently its fullest scope in these large semicircular mantles.

Amongst the many copes treasured at South Kensington there are none, amidst all their splendour, as fine as this, although the fragment of the "Jesse" cope runs it very closely. There are many copes of this period in different parts of the Continent—the Daroca Cope at Madrid, one at Ascagni, another at Bologna, at St. Bertrand-de-Comminges, at "St. John Lateran" at Rome, at Pienza and Toleda, and a fragment of one with the famous altar-frontal at Steeple Aston. These are all assumed to be of "Opus Anglicanum," and they may be described as being technically perfect, the stitches being of fine small tambour stitch, beautifully even, and the draperies exquisitely shaded.

The illustration showing the Syon Cope requires some little explanation. It is wrought on linen, embroidered all over with gold and silver thread and coloured silk. It is 9 feet 7 inches long, 4 feet 8 inches

wide. The whole of the cope except the border is covered with interlacing quatrefoils outlined in gold. The ground of these quatrefoils is covered with red silk and the spaces between them with green silk. Each quatrefoil is filled with scenes from the life of Christ, the Virgin, and figures of St. Michael and of the Apostles. On the green spaces are worked figures of six-winged angels standing on whorls. The chief place on the quatrefoils is given to the crucifixion, where the body of the Saviour is worked in silver and cloth of gold. The Virgin, arrayed in green tunic and golden mantle, is on one side and St. John, in gold, on the other. Above the quatrefoil is another representing the Redeemer seated on a cushioned throne with the Virgin, and below another representing St. Michael overcoming Satan. Other quatrefoils show "Christ appearing to St. Mary Magdalen," "The Burial of the Virgin," "The Coronation of the Virgin," "The Death of the Virgin with the Apostles surrounding her," "The Incredulity of St. Thomas," "St. Simon," "St. Bartholomew," "St. Peter," "St. Paul," "St. Thomas," "St. Andrew," and "St. James." Portions of four other Apostles may be seen, but at some period the cope has been cut down. In its original state the cope showed the twelve Apostles. The lower portion has been cut away and reshaped, and round this is an edging apparently made out of a stole and maniple which point to a later date, as they are worked chiefly in cross-stitch. On the orphrey are emblazoned the arms of Warwick, Castile and Leon, Ferrars, Geneville Everard, the badge of



THE "SYON" COPE.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

the Knights Templars, Clifford, Spencer, Lindsay, Le Botelier, Sheldon, Monteney of Essex, Champernoun, Everard, Tyddeswall Grandeson, Fitz Alan, Hampden, Percy, Clanvowe, Ribbesford, Bygod, Roger de Mortimer, Grove, B. Bassingburn, and many others not recognisable. These coats of arms, it is suggested, belonged to the noble dames who worked the border. The angels which fill the intervening spaces are of the six-winged varieties, each standing on whorls or wheels.

The cope is worked in a fine tambour or chain stitch principally. All the faces, bodies, and draperies are composed of this. A specially noticeable point is that the faces are worked spirally, beginning in the centre of the cheek and being worked round and round, conforming with the muscles of the face. The garments are worked according to the hang of the drapery, very fine effects being obtained. After the work has been completed a hot iron something like a little iron rod with a bulbous end has been pressed into the cheeks, under the throat, and in different parts of the nude body. Occasionally, but seldom, the same device may be seen in the drapery. All the work is exquisitely fine and perfectly even. The groundwork of the quatrefoils is of gold-laid or "couch" work, as is also that of the armorial bearings.

The name "Syon" is somewhat misleading, as the Cope was not made here, but came into the hands of the Bridgettine nuns in 1414, when Henry V. founded the convent of "Syon" at Isleworth. Its origin and date will ever be a matter of conjecture, but Dr. Rock infers that Coventry may have been the

place of its origin. Taking Coventry as a centre with a small radius, several of the great feudal houses the arms of which are on the border of the cope may be found, and Dr. Rock further supposes that Eleanor, widow of Edward the First, may have become a sister of the fraternity unknown, as her arms, Castile and Leon, are on it. "The whole must have taken long in working, and the probability is that it was embroidered by nuns of some convent which stood on or near Coventry." However this may be, it is certain that this splendid piece of English work came into the hands, by some means, of the nuns of Syon, and after remaining with them at Isleworth till Elizabeth's time, it was carried by them through Flanders, France, and Portugal. They remained at the latter place till the same persecution which dispersed the famous Spanish Point lace over the length and breadth of the Continent, and about eighty years ago it was brought back to England, and was given by the remaining members of the Order to the Earl of Shrewsbury. After further vicissitudes of a varied character it was bought by the South Kensington Museum for £110, and now sheds the glory of its golden threads in a dark transept unnoticed except by the student.

III

ECCLESIASTICAL EMBROIDERIES AND VESTMENTS

HALF OF THE STEEPLE ASTON ALTAR FRONTAL,

English, Fourteenth Century.

III

ECCLESIASTICAL EMBROIDERIES AND VESTMENTS

The Pierpont Morgan purchase—The Steeple Aston Altar-frontal—The "Nevil" Altar-frontal at S. K. M.—City palls—Diagram of vestments.

OTHER copes of the same period are in the Madrid Museum, two copes at Bologna, and the "Ascoli" cope recently purchased by Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan and generously returned by him. Some cushions from Catworth Church, Huntingdon, now at the South Kensington Museum, were probably cut from copes, and bought by permission of the Bishop of Ely for £27. A long band of red velvet at South Kensington Museum embroidered with gold and silver and coloured silk has evidently been made from the "Apparels" of an alb. It is in two pieces, each piece depicting five scenes divided by broad arches. The first five are from the life of the Virgin, and are: "The Angel appearing to Anna," "The Meeting of Anna and Joachim," "Birth of the Virgin," "Presentation of the Virgin" "Education of the Virgin." In the second piece are: "The Annunciation," "The Salutation," "The

Nativity," "The Angel appearing to the Shepherds," and the "Journey of the Magi."

Another piece of similar work is the altar-frontal of Steeple Aston, which was originally a cope, and the cope now at Stonyhurst College, originally belonging to Westminster Cathedral. It is made of one seamless piece of gold tissue.

During this great period of English embroidery certain characteristics along with its superb workmanship must be noticed. The earlier the work the finer the modelling of the figures. In the figures of the St. Cuthbert and the Worcester fragments the proportions of the figures are exquisite; at a later date, while the work is just as excellent, the figures become unnatural, the heads being unduly large, the eyes staring, and the perspective entirely out of drawing. Until the fourteenth century this comes so gradually as to be scarcely noted; but after and through the fifteenth century this becomes so marked as to be almost grotesque, and only the genuine religious fervour with which these poor remnants have been worked prevents many of them being ridiculous. The faces gradually show less careful drawing and working, and the figures become squat and topheavy. The emblems of the saints are often omitted.

This decline in the embroiderer's art is specially noticeable in an extraordinary panel to be seen at South Kensington Museum, where an altar-frontal of stamped crimson velvet is appliqued in groups of figures in gold, silver, and silks. In the middle is

THE "NEVIL" ALTAR FRONTAL.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

the Crucifixion, with the Virgin and St. John standing on a strip covered with flowers. On the left is Ralph Nevil, fourth Earl of Westmoreland, 1523, kneeling, and behind him his seven sons. On the right is Lady Catherine Stafford, his wife, also kneeling, and behind her kneel her thirteen daughters. The frontal cost the museum £50 and is well worth it as an historical document. Other important embroideries of the period to be found in England are at Cirencester Cathedral, Ely Cathedral, Salisbury and Carlisle Cathedrals, Chipping Norton and Little Dean in Gloucestershire, East Langdon in Kent, Buckland and Stourton in Worcester, Littleworth in Leicestershire, Lynn in Norfolk, and the Parish Church at Warrington.

Many of the palls belonging to the great city companies belong to this date. The Saddlers' Company's pall is of crimson velvet embroidered with angels surrounding "I.H.S.," and arms of the Company. The Fishmongers' Pall, made at the end of the fifteenth century, has at one end the figure of St. Peter (the patron saint of fishermen) enthroned, and angels on either side, and at the other end St. Peter receiving the keys from our Lord. The Vintners' Pall is made of Italian velvet and cloth of gold and embroidered with St. Martin of Tours.

Religious influence characterised the embroideries of England practically from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. Practically all needlework prior to 1600 is entirely ecclesiastical, and from its

limited range in choice of subjects barely does justice to the fine work this period produced.

Dr. Rock says that "few persons of the present day have the faintest idea of the labour, the money, the time, often bestowed on old embroideries which had been designed by the hands of men and women each in their own craft the best and ablest of the day."

We do not know the length of time these ancient vestments occupied in the making, but twenty-six years is stated to be the period of making the vestments for the Church of San Giovanni, in Florence. This is all worked in close stitches similar to our English work.

Ancient Church Vestments.

The names of the ecclesiastical vestments are somewhat puzzling to those of us who do not belong to the Romish Church, or even to the English High Church. The vestments described are, we believe, in use in the Romish churches now as in the early times when church embroidery was the pleasure and the labour of all classes of English women. The accompanying diagram will better illustrate the use of these vestments than a page of writing.

The Alb is often trimmed handsomely with lace, the apparels are stitched on to the front. The Stoles ought to have three crosses embroidered on it and be 3 yards long. Over this comes the

ECCLESIASTICAL VESTMENTS.

1. Amice.
2. Orphreys.
3. Chasuble.
4. Sleeves of Alb.
5 and 9. Apparel of Alb.
6. Maniple.
7. Stole.
8. Alb.

From "A Guide to Ecclesiastical Law," by kind permission of Mr. Henry Miller

Chasuble, which is the last garment the priest puts on before celebrating Mass. The Cope is a huge semi-circular 10 ft. wide cape. The Maniple is a strip of embroidery 3 ft. 4 in. long worn over the left wrist of the priest.

ECCLESIASTICAL VESTMENTS.

English, Fifteenth or early Sixteenth Century.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

IV

TUDOR EMBROIDERY

IV

TUDOR EMBROIDERY

The influences of the Reformation—Queen Catherine of Aragon's needlecraft — The gorgeous clothes of Henry VIII. — Field of the Cloth of Gold — Queen Elizabeth's embroideries.

AFTER the Reformation and the wholesale destruction of the cathedrals, monasteries, and churches, the gentle dames of England found their occupation gone. The priestly vestments, the sumptuous altar-cloths, and gorgeous hangings were now needless. Those which had been the glory of their owners, and the pictorial representations of Biblical life to the uneducated masses of people, had been ruthlessly torn down and destroyed for the sake of the gold to be found on them. As in the time immediately preceding the French Revolution, costly embroideries were unpicked, and the amount of gold and silver obtained from them became a source of income and profit to their destroyers.

Apart from her household, women had no other interests in those days, unless we accept such anomalies as Lady Jane Grey, who was a marvel

of learning and wisdom. All their long leisure hours had been spent, not in improving their minds, but in beautifying the churches with specimens of their skill. Catherine of Aragon, one of the unfortunate queens of Henry VIII., was a notable needlewoman, and spent much of her short, unhappy time as Queen of England in embroidery. The lace-making of Northampton is said to have been commenced by her during her period of retirement after her divorce. The "Spanish stitch," which was known and used in embroidery of that period, was introduced by her from her own country, and many examples of her skill in embroidery are to be seen in the British Museum and the various homes belonging to our old nobility.

During the reign of Henry VIII. dress became very sumptuous, as the contemporary pictures of the times show. Indeed, all the fervour and feeling which ladies had worked in religious vestments now seemed to find refuge in the over-elaboration of personal wear. Very little lace was used, and that of only a primitive description, so that effect was produced by embroidery in gold and silver threads and the use of pearls and precious stones. The dress of the nobles in the time of Henry VIII. was especially gorgeous, the coats being thickly padded and quilted with gold bullion thread, costly jewels afterwards being sewn in the lozenges. It is related that after his successful divorce King Henry gave a banquet to celebrate his marriage to Anne Boleyn, and wore a coat covered with the jewelled letters "H," and in the height of his satisfaction

allowed the ladies to cut or tear away the jewels as souvenirs of his triumph over Wolsey and Catherine. It is said that he was left in his underwear, so great was the competition for these favours! Robes made of gold tissue, then called Cloth of Gold, were used, and in Henry's meeting with Francis I. the English and French armies vied with each other as to which should present a greater magnificence. The name "the Field of the Cloth of Gold" remains as a guarantee of its splendour.

Under the more austere and religious rule of Queen Mary we might suppose that ecclesiastical embroidery would have somewhat regained a foothold. But the landmarks had been entirely swept away, and we have little to record of the reign, except that Mary herself was a clever needlewoman and worked much of her heartache, at the neglect of her Spanish husband, into her needlework. Her jealousy of her sister Elizabeth caused the latter to spend her life away from the pomps and ceremonies of the Court, and she has left many records of her handiwork, some well authenticated, as, for example, the two exquisite book-covers in the British Museum. Queen Elizabeth cannot, however, be said to have been in any way a patroness of the art of needlecraft. Her talent seems rather to have been devoted to affairs of State—and her wardrobe! On her death, at seventy years of age, she left over one thousand dresses, most of which must have been a cruel weight, so overburdened were they with stiff bullion and trimmed with large pearls and jewels. Her dresses were literally diapered with gold and silver "gimps"

inset with heavier stones, but little real embroidery is shown.

Mary Queen of Scots, on the contrary, was a born needlewoman. During her married life in France she learned the gentle arts of embroidery and lace-making, accomplishments which, as in many humbler women's lives, have served their owners in good stead in times of loneliness and trouble. The Duke of Devonshire possesses specimens of Queen Mary's skill, worked during the long, dreary days of her imprisonment at Fotheringay. It is said that Queen Elizabeth was not above helping herself to the wardrobe and laces that the unfortunate Queen of Scotland brought with her from France.

Much embroidery must have been worked for the adornment of the house after the Reformation, but beyond an occasional old inventory nothing is left to show it. After the Reformation greater luxury in living obtained, and instead of the clean or rush-strewn floors some kind of floor-covering was used. Furniture became much more ornamental, and the use of hangings for domestic purposes was common. Not a thread of these hand-worked hangings remain, but we have the immense and immediate use of tapestry, which first became a manufacture of England in the reign of Henry VIII. It is easy to conceive that English women would readily seize upon the idea supplied in tapestry and adapt its designs to that of embroidery. It is certain that hangings for the old four-post beds were embroidered, as in the inventory of Wolsey's great palace at Hampton Court there is mention of 230 bed-

hangings of English embroidery. Nothing of this remains, so that its style is simply conjectural; and we can only suppose these hangings to have been replicas of the magnificent velvet and satin hangings, covered with laid or couched gold and silver threads, such as Catherine of Aragon would bring with her from Spain. This also would account for their absolute disappearance. The value of the gold and silver in embroidery has always been a fertile source of wealth to the destroyer of ancient fabrics, while many embroideries worked only in silks have escaped this vandalism.

V

EARLY NEEDLEWORK PICTURES AND ACCESSORIES

EARLY "PETIT POINT" PICTURE.

Late Sixteenth Century.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

V

EARLY NEEDLEWORK PICTURES AND ACCESSORIES

"Petit point"—old list of stitches—Stuart bags—Gloves—Shoes—Caps.

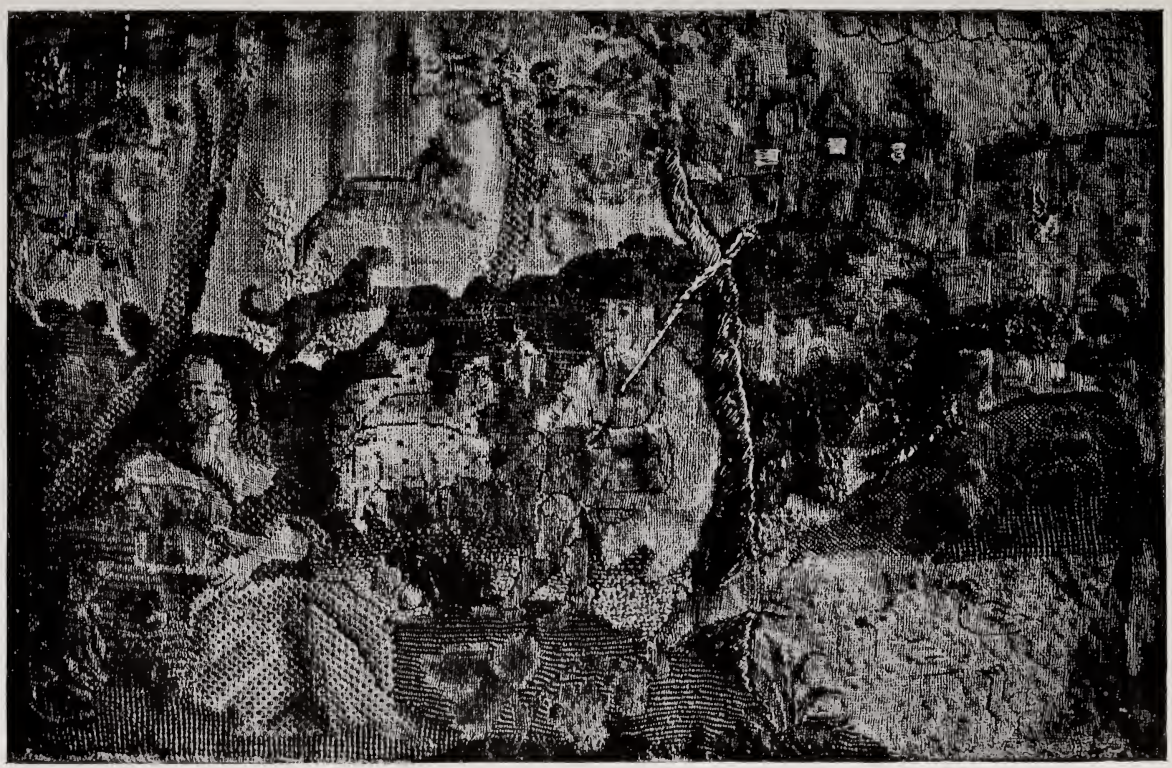
TOWARDS the end of James I.'s reign it is supposed that the earliest needlework pictures appeared. They were obviously literal copies of the tapestries which had now become of general use in the homes of the wealthy, being worked in what is known as "petit point," or "little stitch." This stitch was worked on canvas of very close quality, with fine silk thread, one stitch only being taken over the junction of the warp and the weft of the canvas instead of the "cross stitch" of later days. Very few of these specimens are left of an early date. A panel, measuring 30 inches by 16 inches, in perfect condition, and dated 1601, was sold at Christie's Rooms this year for £115. The purchaser, Mr. Stoner, of King Street, sold it next day at a very considerable profit.

At this period the workers of these pictures did not draw upon Biblical subjects for their inspiration

(with great advantage to the picture, it may be stated). The subjects were either fanciful adaptations from real life, with the little people dressed in contemporary costume, or dainty little mythological subjects, such as the "Judgment of Paris," "Corydon wooing Phyllis," with most absurd little castles of Tudor construction in impossible landscapes, where the limpid stream meandered down fairy-like hills into a shining lake, which held dolphins under the water and water-fowl above it. The illustration depicts such a specimen, and shows one of these tiny pictures worked in no less than ten different stitches of lacework, in addition to the usual petit point. The number of these stitches is legion. In the reign of Charles I., John Taylor, the water-poet, wrote in 1640:

"For tent worke, raised worke, first worke, laid worke, net worke,
Most curious purl, or rare Italian cut worke,
Fire, ferne stitch, finny stitch, new stitch, chain stitch,
Brave bred stitch, fisher stitch, Irish stitch, and Queen stitch,
The Spanish stitch, Rosemary stitch, and mowle stitch,
The smarting whip stitch, back stitch, and cross stitch;
All these are good, and this we must allow,
And they are everywhere in practice now."

These are not *all* the stitches in vogue during the first era of needlework pictures. A single glance at one of the early specimens, though it may not *charm*, fills one with amazement at the amount of toil, ingenuity, patience, and downright *love* for the work the ancient needlewoman must have possessed.



VERY EARLY "PETIT POINT" PICTURE.

(*Author's Collection.*)

Not only pictures, however, were made in petit point. Many dainty little accessories of the toilet gave scope to the delicate fancy and nimble fingers of the ladies who had found solace from the cessation of their labours for the priesthood in making dainty little handbags and other pretty articles, each a marvel of minute handicraft. One bag in my possession measures only four inches square, and is worked on fine canvas, about forty threads to the square inch, the design being the favourite Tudor rose, each petal worked in lace stitch, and raised from the centre which is made of knots worked with golden hair, flat green leaves exquisitely shaded, and a charming bit of the worker's skill in the shape of a pea's pod, open and raised, showing the tiny little peas in a row. An exquisitely worked butterfly with raised wings in lace stitch is on the other side. The grounding of the whole is run with flat gold thread, making a "cloth of gold" ground, strings made of similarly worked canvas, with gold thread and silk tassels complete a bag fit for the Princess Golden Locks of our fairy tales. This little bag cost the writer 5 guineas, and was cheap at the price. The South Kensington Museum have several specimens, and although many are very exquisite, there is not one quite so perfect in design nor in such condition. Other little trifles made in similar style are the embroidered gauntlets of the buff leather glove worn at the time. These have become rarer than any other embroideries, as they were not merely for ornament but for actual wear. Four or five of these gauntlet gloves are in the South Kensington Collec-

tion, but are of a later date than the "petit point" period.

The use of gloves in England was not very general, we may infer, in the earlier ages of embroidery. There are certain evidences, however, showing that the glove was part of the priestly outfit, remains of gloves having been found on the bones of Thomas à Becket when they were transferred from the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral to the special shrine prepared for them; and a crimson leather pair, bearing the sacred monogram in embroidered gold, are preserved in the New College, Oxford, belonging to the founder, William of Wykeham, who opened the college in 1386.

It was not until the fourteenth century that the wearing of gloves became general, and practically nothing remains to show what manner of hand-covering was worn until the Tudor period. Henry VIII. was exceptionally lavish and extravagant in the use of handsomely embroidered gloves, and few of his portraits show him without a sumptuous glove in one hand. He had gloves for all functions—like a modern fashionable woman. A pair of hawking gloves belonging to him are in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and in South Kensington is one of a pair presented by Henry to his friend and Councillor Sir Anthony Denny. It is of buff, thin leather, with a white satin gauntlet, embroidered with blue and red silk in applique work, decorated with seed-pearls and spangles, and trimmed with gold lace. The Tudor rose, the crown, and the lion are worked amidst a splendour of gold and pearls.

A STUART GLOVE.

(*S. K. M. Collection.*)

Queen Elizabeth must have inherited her love for gorgeous apparel along with her strong personality and masterful spirit, as her expenditure for gloves alone was proverbial. The favourite offering to her was a pair of gloves, but she was not above accepting shoes, handkerchiefs, laces, and even gowns from her faithful and admiring subjects. On her visit to Oxford in 1578 she was presented by the Chancellor of the University with a pair of perfumed gloves, embroidered with gold and set with jewels, which cost the University sixty shillings, an immense sum in those days. Other historic gloves are in the various museums of the country, seldom or never coming into the open market. In the Braikenridge Collection sold at Christie's in February of this year I was able to secure one for £2 12s. 6d., immediately afterwards being offered double the price for it.

The gloves belonging to Charles I. and Queen Henrietta Maria were very ornamental, and it is said that even Oliver Cromwell, with all his austerity, was not proof against the fascination of the decorated glove.

With Charles II. the embroidered gloves seem to have vanished along with the stumpwork pictures, of which more anon.

Dainty shoes were embroidered in those old times. These, being articles of wear, like the gloves, are very rare. The same fine petit point work is seen on them; seed-pearls and in-run gold threads adorn them, and frequently the Tudor rose, in raised work, forms the shoe knot. Two pairs in Lady Wolseley's

Collection, sold in 1906, fetched six guineas, and nine and a half guineas. Tiny pocket-books were covered with this pretty work, and charming covers almost as fresh as when they were worked are occasionally unearthed, made to hold the old-fashioned housekeeping and cooking books.

One wonders oftentime how many, and yet, alas! how few, specimens of this old petit point work have been preserved. It is only during recent years that the "cult of the antique" has been fashionable, and is also becoming a source of income and profit to the many who indulge in its quest. Only members of learned antiquarian societies or born reliquaries troubled themselves to acquire ancient articles of historic interest because they were *old*, and served to form the sequence in the fairy tales of Time. Anything "old" was ruthlessly destroyed, as being either past wear, shabby, or old-fashioned, and countless treasures, both in ecclesiastical and secular art, have at all periods been recklessly destroyed for the sake of their intrinsic value in gold or jewels. In the early days of my life I was allowed to pick out the corals and seed-pearls from an old Stuart needle picture "for a doll's necklace!" the picture itself probably going into the "rag-bag" of the mid-Victorian good housekeeper.

VI

STUART CASKETS AND MIRRORS

VI

STUART CASKETS AND MIRRORS

Secret drawers and hidden receptacles—High prices in the Salerooms.

AMONG the many treasures of this exquisite period of needlecraft are the well-known Stuart caskets. Very interesting and valuable are these charming boxes, many of them being in a fine state of preservation, owing to their having been enclosed in either a wooden or leathern box specially made to contain them. These queer little boxes are frequently made in the shape of Noah's ark. The lid being raised, a fitted mirror is disclosed. The mirror slides out, and a secret recess may be discovered to hold letters. The front falls down, disclosing any number of tiny drawers, each drawer being silk-lined and the front of it embroidered. Here, again, we may look for secret drawers. Very seldom does the drawer run to the width of the cabinet, but by removing every drawer and carefully searching for springs or slides many a tiny recess is disclosed, where costly jewels, and perhaps a love-

gage, has reposed safely from the sight of unworthy eyes.

Every square inch of these caskets is covered with embroidery, sometimes in canvas, worked with the usual scriptural or mythological design, and in others with white satin, exquisitely embroidered with figures and floral subjects. Those in best preservation have been covered with mica, which has preserved both the colour and the fabric. The fittings are generally of silver. On the few occasions when these boxes or caskets come into the market high prices are realised. Messrs. Christie last year obtained £40 for a good specimen. I have never seen one sold under £30, and as much as £100 has been given.

Another pretty fancy was to cover small trays, presumably for the work or dressing table, with embroidery. Not many of these remain, the wear of removing them from place to place having been too much for their staying powers. One in my possession is a small hexagonal tray with raised sides, embroidered in coloured silks in floral design, on what was once white satin. It is by no means a thing of beauty now, but as a specimen it is interesting, and "a poor thing, but mine own," which covers a multitude of shortcomings in these old relics, fortunately.

Far more frequently met with, though quite prohibitive in price, are the Stuart embroidered mirrors, which easily command £80 to £100 in the salerooms. They are generally set in a frame of oak, leaving five or six inches (which would otherwise be covered with carving or veneer) for the

"STUART" MIRROR FRAME.

(*Lady Wolseley's Collection.*)

embroidery. The mirror itself is comparatively small, being only a secondary consideration, and often little remains of it for its original purpose, as the glass is blurred and the silvering gone. Many of these mirrors have *bevelled* glass, which, of course, is wrong.

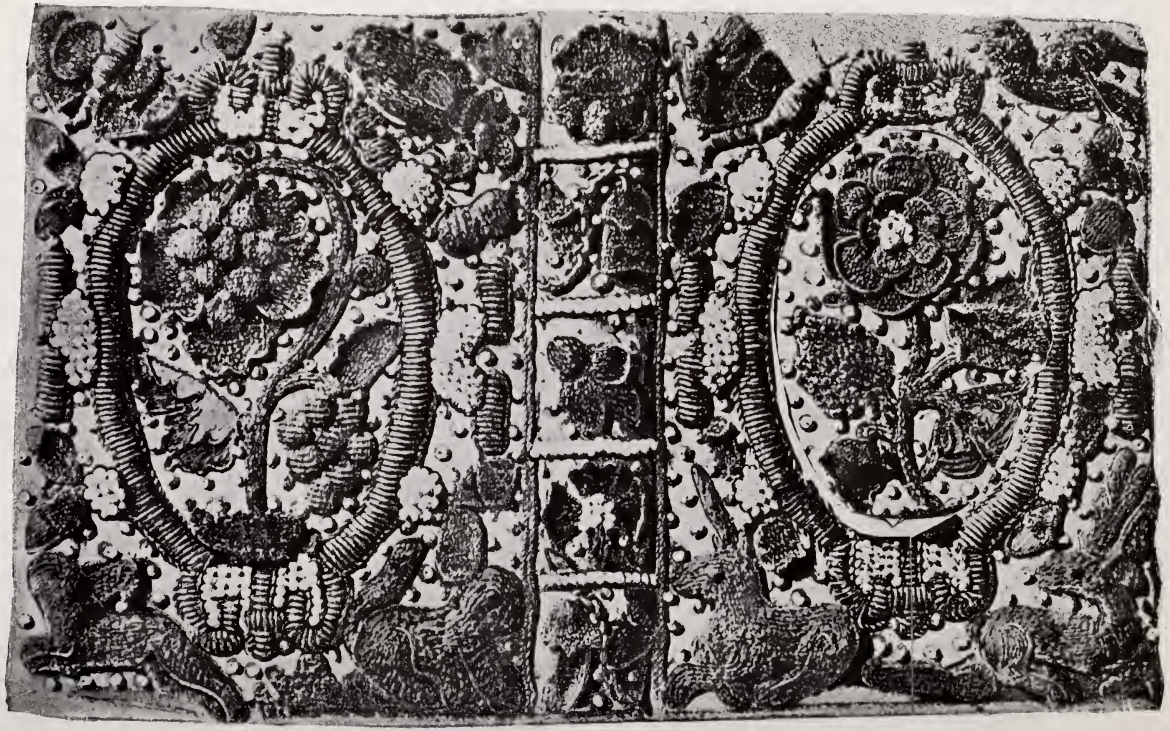
The mirror shown in the illustration is one recently belonging to Viscountess Wolseley and sold by her, among other Stuart needlework specimens, at Messrs. Puttick & Simpson's in 1906. This mirror sold for £100. The figures represent Charles I. and Queen Henrietta Maria, one on either side of the mirror. The figure at the top of the frame is difficult to understand; whether she is an angel or a mere Court lady must be left to conjecture. The rolling clouds and the blazing sun are above her head, and a peacock, with tail displayed, is on one side and a happy-looking stag on the other. Two royal residences adorn the topmost panels on either side, with all their bravery of flying flags and smoking chimneys, and the lion and the leopard occupy the lower panels. The latter animal identifies the King and Queen, who might otherwise be Charles II. and his consort, as after Charles I.'s time the leopard gave place to the unicorn for some unexplained reason. Other typical little Stuart animals and birds fill in the extra panels, such as the spotted dog who chases a little hare who is never caught, and the gaily-coloured parroquet and kingfisher, which no respectable Stuart picture would be without. The caterpillar, the ladybird, and the snail are all *en evidence*; and below is a real pond,

covered with talc, and containing fish and ducks, the banks being made of tiny branching coral beads and tufted silk and bullion work.

About this time, when Venetian lace came into fashionable use as an adjunct to the exquisite Stuart dress, tiny coloured beads were imported from Venice. The embroiderers at once seized upon them as a new and possibly more lasting means of showing their pretty fancies in design. Many delightful specimens of these beadwork pictures are preserved, the colours, of course, being as fresh as yesterday. The ground was always of white satin, now faded and discoloured with age, and often torn with the heaviness of the beadwork design. They are scarcely so charming as the all needlework pictures, but still are delightful and covetable articles. The exigencies of the beadwork, however, lends a certain stiffness and ungainliness to the figures.

VII

EMBROIDERED BOOKS AND "BLACK WORK"



"STUART" BOOK COVER.

(*British Museum.*)

VII

EMBROIDERED BOOKS AND "BLACK WORK"

Style and symbolism—Specimen in British Museum and Bodleian Libraries—"Black work"

AMONG the many dainty examples of Tudor and Stuart needlework are to be found the exquisitely embroidered book-covers which date from Queen Elizabeth's girlhood until the time of Charles II. They were always of diminutive size, and many stitches diversify their covering; oftentimes they were liberally embroidered with seed-pearls, and in these instances most frequently this fashion has been their salvation. A book somehow always seems to be a more sacred thing than a picture, and the costly little volumes which remain to show this dainty handicraft have apparently always been used either for Church or private devotional purposes.

The designs of the book-covers almost always follow certain styles. These are either heraldic, scriptural, symbolical, floral, or arabesque.

The first-named variety usually belonged to royalty

or one of the many noble houses whose ladies busied themselves with fair needlework. The shield, containing the coat of arms of the family, occupied the centre of the book-cover, being formed in raised gold and silver guipure or cord, and on the reverse the worker's initials frequently appear, with a pretty border in gold and silver, to outline the edges.

The scriptural book-covers are always worked on canvas in fine petit point stitches. One in South Kensington Museum is larger than most of these volumes, and has on one side Solomon in all his glory and on the reverse Jacob and his ladder and King David. These canvas-covered books appear to have suffered most from the wear and tear of time, and very few remain.

The symbolical covers are few, and mostly uninteresting, They are worked as a rule on silk and satin in loose satin stitches, which have suffered much from friction. The sacred monogram is often the centre of the device. A favourite design was adorning the back of the books with portraits of the martyred King Charles I., Queen Henrietta Maria, and the popular Duke of Buckingham.

The stitches used were generally chain-stitch, split-stitch, petit point, and lace-stitch; and the patterns were most frequently outlined with a gimp made of flattened spiral wire, or *purl*, which was a fine copper wire covered with coloured silks and cut in lengths for use. Very often, also, small silver spangles were employed, either stitched down with a piece of purl or a seed-pearl. Frequently the covers

POCKET-BOOK OF SATIN, EMBROIDERED WITH COLOURED SILKS AND SILVER-GILT THREAD.

Said to have been the property of Queen Elizabeth.

(*In Countess Brownlow's Collection.*)

were of velvet with the designs appliquéd down to it, and *laid* or *couch* work outlined the designs. Sometimes flat pieces of metal were cut to shape and stitched down, as in one instance where the corners of the books were trimmed with the rays of the sun cut in gold, and stitched over with a gold thread.

Many of the charming little bags of which mention has already been made are supposed to have been worked to hold the Prayer Book and Book of Psalms, without which no devout lady deemed herself fully equipped.

The most famous book is Queen Elizabeth's Book in the British Museum. The cover is of choice green velvet, the flat of the back has five roses embroidered in lace, raised stitches and gold and pearl. The Royal Arms are on either side of the book in a lozenge of red silk and pearls. The whole design, apart from this, is worked in red and white roses and scrolls of gold and silk. This gorgeous little cover contains "The Mirrour of Glasse of the Synneful Soul," written by Elizabeth herself, and of it she writes that she "translated it out of french ryme into english prose, joyning the sentences together as well as the capacities of my symple witte and small lerning could extende themselves." It is dedicated "To our most noble and virtuous Queen Katherine [Katherine Parr] from Assherige, the last day of the year of our Lord God, 1544."

In the Bodleian Library there is another treasured little book, again worked by Queen Elizabeth. It is only 7 inches by 5 inches, and has the same design on both sides. In this the ground is what is

known as "tapestry stitch," worked in thick, pale-blue silk, and the design is of interlacing gold and silver threads with a Tudor rose in each corner. "K. P." is marked on the cover, and shows that this also was worked for Queen Katherine Parr.

Yet another little book is in the British Museum. It contains a prayer composed by Queen Katherine Parr, and is writen on vellum by Queen Elizabeth.

The cover illustrated is a typical example of the class of embroidered works of the period. Later the covers showed less intricate work, and finally developed into mere velvet covers embroidered with silver or gold.

BLACK WORK.

A curious phase of Old English embroidery is the well-known "Black Work," which is said to have been introduced by Catherine of Aragon into England, and was also known as "Spanish work." The work itself was a marvel of neatness, precision, and elegant design, but the result cannot be said to have been commensurate with the labour of its production. Most frequently the design was of scroll-work, worked with a fine black silk back-stitching or chain-stitch. Round and round the stitches go, following each other closely. Bunches of grapes are frequently worked solidly, and even the popular peascod is worked in outline stitch, and often the petit point period lace stitches are copied, and roses and birds worked separately and after stitched to the design. There are many examples of this famous "Spanish"

STUART EMBROIDERED CAP. (*S.K.M. Collection.*)

work in the South Kensington Museum. Quilts, hangings, coats, caps, jackets, smocks are all to be seen, some with a couched thread of gold and silver following the lines of the scrolls. This is said to be the Spanish stitch referred to in the old list of stitches, and very likely may be so, as the style and manner are certainly not English; and we know that Catherine of Aragon brought wonders of Spanish stitchery with her, and she herself was devoted to the use of the needle. The story of how when called before Cardinal Wolsey and Campeggio, to answer to King Henry's accusations she had a skein of embroidery silk round her neck is well known.

The black silk outline stitchery or linen lasted well through the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Very little of it is seen outside the museums, as, not being strikingly beautiful or attractive, it has been destroyed.

Another phase of the same stitchery was working cotton and linen garments, hangings, and quilts in a kind of quilted pattern with yellow silk.

Anything more unlike the quilting of fifty years ago cannot be imagined. The finest materials were used, the padding being placed bit by bit in its place—not in the wholesale fashion of later years, when a sheet or two of wadding was placed between the sheets of cotton or linen, and a coarse back-stitching outlined in great scrawling patterns held the whole together. The old "quilting" work was made in tiny panels, illustrating shields and other heraldic devices, and had a surface as fine as

carved ivory. When, as in the case of one sample at South Kensington, the quilt is additionally embroidered with beautiful fine floss silk flowers, the effect is very lovely.

VIII

STUART PICTURES

VIII

STUART PICTURES

"Peitt point"—"Stump work"—Royalistic symbols.

THOUGH these pictures bear the name of Stuart, many of them are undoubtedly Tudor. The earliest (if the evidence of costume is of any value) must have been worked in Elizabeth's time, but as the authenticated specimens date only from the reign of James I. they are known as Stuart. The only pictures worked in the early days of this art were worked in petit-point, the tiny stitch which imitated tapestry, and very quaint are the specimens left to us. The favourite themes were entirely pagan. Gods and goddesses disported themselves among leafy trees. Cupid lightly shot his arrows, the woods were inhabited by an unknown flora and fauna which seem all its own. The very dogs seem to be a different species, having more likeness to the china dogs of the spotted or liver and white variety which the Staffordshire potters made at the beginning of our own century. Innumerable little castles were perched in perfectly inaccessible positions on towering crags,

and the laws of perspective were generally conspicuous by their absence. The sun in those days was a very visible body, and apparently delightful to work, no Stuart picture being without one; the rolling clouds oftentimes are confused with the convoluted body of the caterpillar, little difference being made in the design. The birds were of very brilliant plumage, and the world was evidently a very gay and sportive place when these fair ladies spent their leisure over this embroidery! These early pictures seldom show the religious feeling that afterwards slowly worked its way through the Stuart days (though, perhaps, disguised under royalistic symbolism), until in the reign of Queen Anne it became more or less a fashion, in pictorial needle-craft. It burst out afresh in the early nineteenth century and became an absolute obsession of the early Victorian Berlin-wool workers with most disastrous results to both design and work.

Until the end of Charles I.'s reign needlework pictures must have been scarce, as we find one enumerated in the inventory of his "Closet of Rarities." It is possible that the many pictures which represent Charles I. were worked by loyalist ladies, *after his execution* and *during the Commonwealth.* In many of these pictures his own hair is said to have been used, thereby becoming relics of him who was known as "the Martyred King." On a very finely worked portrait of Charles I., at South Kensington Museum, King Charles's hair is worked amongst the silken threads.

Throughout this time, no matter what the subjects,

KING CHARLES I., WORKED IN FINE SILK EMBROIDERY.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

most of which were notably striking scenes from Scripture history, such as "Esther and King Ahasuerus," "Solomon and the Queen of Sheba," "The Judgment of Solomon" (a very favourite subject), and other scenes of Old Testament history, all the kings were Charles I. and all the Queens Henrietta Maria. One and all wore early Stuart costumes. Even Pharaoh's daughter wore the handsome dress of the day, with Point lace falling collar and real pearls round her neck. It is a fashion to jeer at this anachronism ; but may it not perhaps be that we take these pictures too literally, and deny the workers their feelings of passionate devotion to the lost cause. Doubtless they worked their loyalty to their beloved monarch into these pretty and pleasing fancies, just as it is said that the fashion of "finger-bowls" was introduced later so that the loyal gentlemen of the day might drink to the King "*over the water.*" I see no cause to deny intelligence to these dear dead women, who were capable of exquisite needlecraft and fine design, and whose devotion was shown in many instances by giving up jewels, houses, and lands for the King!

The fashion of "stump" or stamp work appears to have been derived from Italy. Italian needlework of this time abounds with it, and, it must be admitted, of a superior design and style to that which was known here as "stump" work. Until the eighteenth century English work was more or less archaic in every branch. Personally, I see no more absurdity in the queer doll-like figures than in contemporary wood-carving. It was a period of tenta-

tive effort, and was, of course, beneath criticism. English Art has ever been an effort until its one bright burst of genius in the eighteenth century, while the continental nations appear to have breathed artistic perception with life itself.

The prototype of our stump work pictures, the Italian raised work, are gracious, graceful figures perfectly proportioned, and set in lovely elegant arabesques, with no exaggeration of style or period. Some specimens of this work must have been brought from Italy, through France, and the English workers quickly adopted and adapted them to their own heavier intelligence. Some of the little figures are certainly very grotesque. Frequently the tiny little hands are larger than the heads, but the *stitchery* is exquisite.

No time seems to have been too long to have been spent in perfecting the petals of a rose, the loose wing of a butterfly, or to make a realistic curtain in fine Point lace stitches to hang from the King's canopy. Some of the King's dresses are said to have been made of tiny treasured pieces of his garments. There is no doubt that much devoted sentiment was worked into these little figures, and these touches of nature add a pathetic interest to them.

In the illustration of "King Solomon receiving the Queen of Sheba" from the South Kensington Collection Solomon is obviously King Charles I., while the Queen of Sheba is equally recognisable as Queen Henrietta Maria. The picture is perhaps the finest in the Kensington Collection, the colours being fresh and the work intact. The little faces are worked

SUPERB EXAMPLE OF STUART PICTURE.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

over a padding of soft frayed silk or wool, the features being drawn in fine back-stitch. Natural hair is worked on the King's and Queen's heads, and the crowns are real gold thread set with pearls. The canopy is worked *solidly* in silk and gold thread, and from it hang loose curtains in old brocade, worked over and over with gold and silken thread.

The King's mantle and that of the Lord Chamberlain are worked in Point lace stitches, afterwards applied to the bodies and hanging loosely. The Queen's dress is brocade, worked over with gold and silver, while strings of real pearls decorate the necks and wrists of the ladies, and real white lace of the Venetian variety trims the neck and sleeves of these fairy people. The Stuart castle we see perched up among the trees and touching the sun's beams is more like an English farmhouse than Whitehall. Yet either this or Windsor Castle is always supposed to be represented.

The British lion and the leopard, again, make the identity of these little people more certain. The quaint little trees bear most disproportionate fruits, the acorn and pears being about the same size, but all beautifully worked in Point-lace stitches over wooden moulds. The hound and the hare, the butterfly and the grub, and the strange birds make up one of the most typical Stuart pictures.

The next illustration shows another development of picture-making. Here the grounding is of white satin, as in the previous illustration, but the figures are worked on canvas separately, in fine petit-point

stitch, afterwards being cut away and placed on the white satin ground with a few silk stitches and the whole outlined with a fine black silk cord. The subject is "The Finding of Moses," and is as full of anachronisms as the last, only that here again Pharaoh's daughter is worked in memory of Queen Henrietta Maria, and the tiny boy in the corner is Charles II., and Moses the infant Duke of York. The four-winged cherubs are the guardian angels who are watching over the lost fortunes of the Stuart family, and rose of England and the lilies of France which form the border are emblematical of the royal lineage of their lost King's family. The hound and hare still chase each other gaily round the border, and in the picture the hare is seen emerging, like the Stuarts, from exile and obscurity.

Sufficient has perhaps been said to cause those who possibly may have misunderstood these pictures to give them another glance, and allow imagination to carry them back to the times of the exiled Royal Family and their brave adherents, whose women allowed not their memories to slumber nor their labours to flag. These pictures must have been made during the Commonwealth and the reign of Charles II. In no case, to my knowledge, has King Charles II. been depicted in stitchery, nor yet Catherine of Braganza. James II. is equally ignored, and with him their mission seemed to have been accomplished. Possibly the people had had by this time sufficient of the Stuarts, and the memory of King Charles the martyr had waxed dim. Certain

STUART PICTURE, SHOWING THE FINDING OF MOSES.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

it is that with James II. Stuart needlework pictures suddenly ceased.

Stump work Symbols.

The symbolism of the various animals, birds, insects, and flowers which are, apparently without rhyme or reason, placed in one great disarray in the Stuart pictures is said to have been heraldic and symbolic. The sunbeam coming from a cloud, the white falchion, and the chained hart are heraldic devices belonging to Edward III.

The buck and the strawberry, which are so often seen, belong to the Frazer Clan of Scotland, and may have been worked by ladies who were kith and kin of this clan.

The unicorn was the device of James I. and the siren or mermaid of Lady Frazer, who is said to have worked her own golden hair in the heart of a Tudor rose on a book cover for James I.

The hart was also a device of Richard II. and the "broom pod" of the Plantagenets. The caterpillar and butterfly was specially badges of Charles I., while the oak-tree and acorn were invariably worked into every picture in memory of Charles II.'s escape in an oak tree.

IX

SAMPLERS

IX

SAMPLERS

Real art work—Specimens in South Kensington Museum—
High price now obtained.

A "SAMPLER" is an example or a sample of the worker's skill and cleverness in design and stitching. When they first appeared, as far as we know about the middle of the seventeenth century, they were merely a collection of embroidery, lace, cut and drawn work stitches, and had little affinity to the samplers of a later date, which seemed especially ordained to show various patterns of cross stitches, the alphabet, and the numerals.

The early samplers were real works of art; they were frequently over a yard long, not more than a quarter of a yard wide, and were adorned with as many as thirty different patterns of lace and cut and drawn work. This extreme narrowness was to enable the sampler to be rolled on a little ivory stick, like the Japanese *kakemonas*.

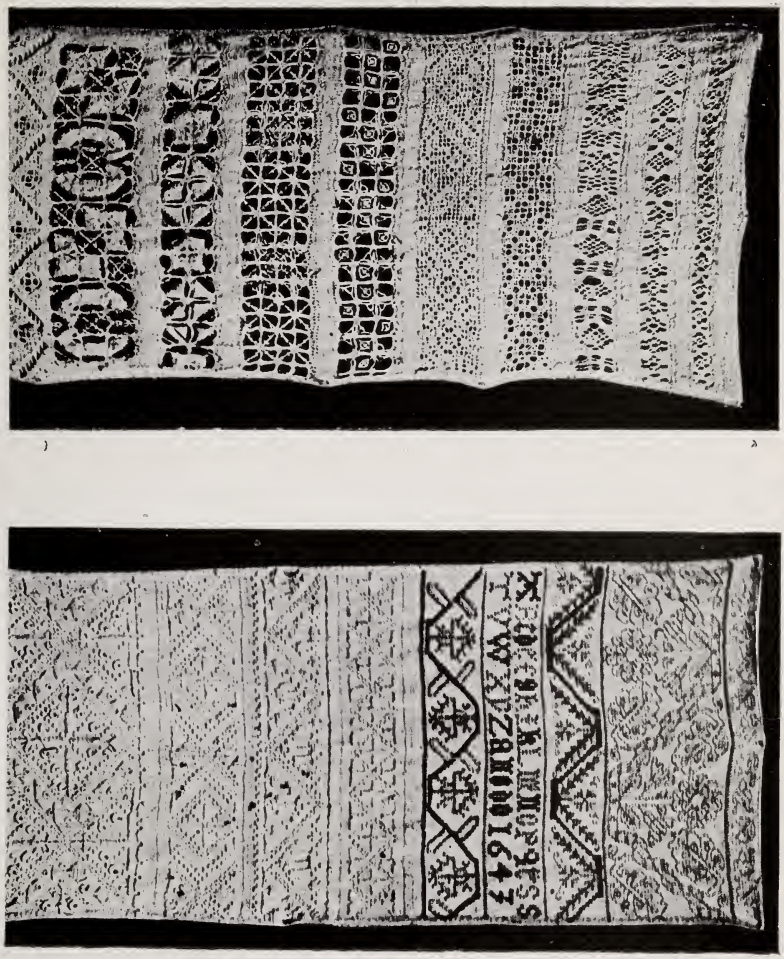
The foundation of all the early samplers was a coarse linen, and to this fact we owe the preservation of many of them. Those made two hundred years

later, on a coarse, loose canvas, even now show signs of decay, while these ancient ones on linen are as perfect as when made, only being gently mellowed by Time to the colour of old ivory.

The earliest sampler known is dated 1643, and was worked by Elizabeth Hinde. It is only 6 inches by 6½ inches, and is entirely lacework, and apparently has been intended for part of a sampler. The worker perhaps changed her mind and considered rightfully that she had accomplished her *chef d'œuvre*, or as so often explains these unfinished specimens, the Reaper gathered the flower, and only this dainty piece of stitching was left to perpetuate the memory of Elizabeth Hinde.

The sampler in question is just one row of cut and drawn work and another of fine Venetian lace-work, worked in "punto in aria." A lady in Court dress holds a rose to shield herself from Cupid, a dear little fellow with wings, who is shooting his dart at her heart. Perhaps poor Elizabeth Hinde died of it and this is her "swan song."

The earliest samplers appeared to have been worked only on white cotton or silk. A favourite design, apart from the lacework samplers, was the "damask pattern" sampler, a specimen of which may be noted, commencing with the fifth row, on the sampler illustrated. Sometimes the sampler was entirely composed of it, and although ineffective, remains as a marvel of skill. It was worked entirely in flat satin stitch and eyelet holes, known as the "bird's eye" pattern. In the illustration four rows of cutwork will be noted, followed by five rows of



A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY "SAMPLER" (ENGLISH), SHOWING CUT AND DRAWN WORK.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

drawn threadwork, and above are patterns worked in floral and geometric designs in coloured silks. The alphabet and the date 1643 complete this monument of skill, which may be seen in the South Kensington Museum.

The succeeding illustration shows a more ambitious attempt, and is considered one of the finest specimens known. It was worked by Elizabeth Mackett, 1696. It is on white linen with ten rows of floral patterns worked with coloured silks in cross, stem, and satin stitches, with some portions worked separately and applied. Five rows of white satin stitch, two rows of alphabet letters in coloured silks, and four rows of exquisite punto in aria lace patterns are followed by the alphabet again in white stitches and the maker's name and date. The sampler is in superb preservation, the colours are particularly rich and well chosen. This sampler is also from the South Kensington Collection. Often the worker's name is followed by a verse or rhyme having a delightfully prosaic tendency. One can imagine the poor girls, in the early days we are writing of, writhing under the infliction of having slowly and painstakingly to work the solemn injunction—

"When this you see remember me
And keep me in your mind,
And be not like a weathercock
That turns at every wind.

When I am dead and laid in grave,
And all my bones are rotten,
By this you may remember me
When I should be forgotten."

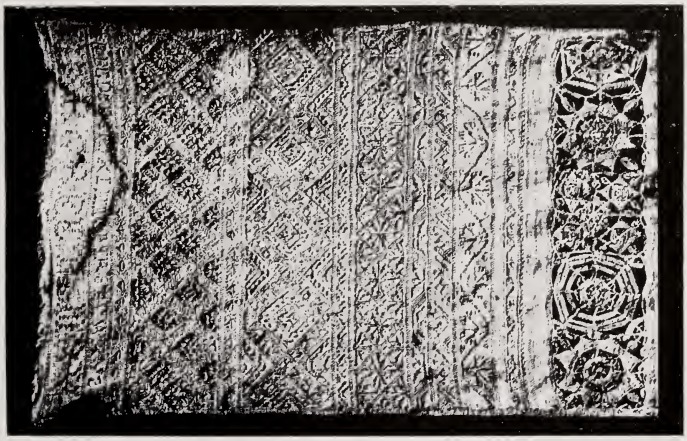
And we can appreciate how little Maggie Tulliver ("The Mill on the Floss") must have girded at the philosophy she was compelled to work into her sampler—

> "Look well to what you take in hand,
> For learning is better than house or land;
> When land is gone and money is spent
> Then learning is most excellent."

With the eighteenth century the beauty of the Samplers distinctly declined. They became squarer, and were bordered with a running pattern, and the whole canvas became more or less pictorial. Inevitably the end of this art came. Ugly realistic bowpots with stumpy trees decorated the picture in regular order. The alphabet still appeared, and moral reflection seemed to be the aim of the worker rather than to make the Sampler show beauty of stitchery. Quaint little maps of England are often seen, surrounded with floral borders, but it remained to the early nineteenth century to show how the Sampler became reduced to absurdity. One of the quaintest and most amusing Samplers at South Kensington is a 12-inch by 8-inch example in woollen canvas and embroidered with coloured silk. At the lower end is a soldier, a tiny realistic house, a dovecot, any number of flowering plants, a stag and other animals. Above is a band of worked embroidery enclosing the words, "This is my dear Father." The remaining spaces are filled in with angels blowing trumpets, double-headed eagle, peacocks and other birds, and baskets of fruit. In spite

EARLY ENGLISH "SAMPLER," SHOWING EMBROIDERY IN COLOURED SILK.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)



EARLY ENGLISH "SAMPLER," SHOWING BIRD'S-EYE EMBROIDERY AND CUT AND DRAWN WORK.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

of its absurdity, this little piece is far more pleasant than the tombstone inscriptions which abound, and is, after all, delightfully suggestive of home and affection.

Another quaint piece at South Kensington is a sampler worked by poor Harriet Taylor, *aged seven!* At the top are four flying angels, two in clouds flanking a crown beneath the letters "G. R." In the middle stands a flower-wreathed arch, with columns holding vases of flowering plants; above are the words, "The Temple of Fancy," and within an enclosed space the following homily:

"Not Land but Learning
Makes a man complete
Not Birth but Breeding
Makes him truly Great
Not Wealth but Wisdom
Does adorn the State
Virtue not Honor
Makes him Fortunate
Learning, Breeding, Wisdom
Get these three
Then Wealth and Honor
Will attend on thee."

Then follows a house called "The Queen's Palace," standing in an enclosed flower-garden. This masterpiece of moral philosophy from the hands of a child of seven years is dated 1813.

An exaggerated conception of the value of old Samplers is very widely spread. Only the seventeenth-century Samplers are really of consequence, and these fetch fancy prices. In the sale-rooms a long narrow Samplers of lace stitches and drawn-threadwork would

bring as much as a handsome piece of lace. They are practically unattainable, and in this case the law of supply and demand does not obtain. It is beyond the needlewomen of the present day to imitate these old Samplers. Life is too short, and demands upon time are so many and varied, that a lifetime of work would result in making only one. Therefore, the fortunate owners of these seventeenth-century Samplers may cherish their possessions, and those less lucky possess their souls in patience, and hoard their golden guineas in the hope of securing one. Twenty years ago a few pounds would have been ample to secure a fine specimen, but £30 will now secure only a short fragment.

During the last three years I have not seen a good Sampler at any London Curio or lace shop, and none appear in the sale-rooms. The eighteenth-century Samplers are comparatively common, the map variety especially so, and can be purchased for a pound or so, but these are not desirable to the collector.

X

THE WILLIAM AND MARY EMBROIDERIES

JACOBEAN WALL-HANGING WORKED IN COLOURED CREWELS ON LINEN GROUND.

(S.K.M. Collection.)

X

THE WILLIAM AND MARY EMBROIDERIES

Queen Mary "a born needlewoman"—The Hampton Court Embroideries — Revival of petit point — Jacobean hangings.

ONE of the most convincing facts in arguments that there *is* a revival in the gentle art of needlecraft is that it has become the fashion to drape our windows, cover our furniture, and panel our walls with printed copies of the Old Jacobean needlework. Many people, knowing nothing whatever about the history of needlework, wonder where the designs for the printed linens which line the windows of Messrs. Liberty, Goodall and Burnett's colossal frontages in Regent Street have been found. In time amazement gives way to admiration for these quaint blues and greens, roses and pale yellows, worked in great scrolls with exotic flowers and still more exotic birds, and the funny little hillocks with delightful little pagoda-like cottages nestling amongst them, and many and various little animals which seem to keep perpetual holiday under the everlasting blooms. The designs

are taken bodily from the historical hangings of the later seventeenth century. After the abdication and flight of James II. to St. Germains, his daughter Mary came over with her Dutch husband, William the Stadtholder—or, rather, William came over and brought his wife, the daughter of the late king, for William had no intention of assuming the style and life of Prince Consort, but came well to the front, and kept there. It was not "VICTORIA *and Albert*" in those days, but WILLIAM and MARY, who ruled England, and ruled it well. William III. must have been a man of strong personality, and he managed to quell all the rebellions of his reign, and during the time he ruled over us the country settled down to a peaceful state that has remained to the present time.

Queen Mary had quite sufficient employment in settling herself and her household, and generally managing the domestic matters pertaining to the new kingdom she had come into. She apparently had a very free hand in rebuilding Hampton Court, which she particularly made her home, absolutely pulling the interior down, and rebuilding and re-decorating it according to her own taste, which was not that of the Stuart persuasion with its gorgeous magnificence, but the more homely and solid Dutch. Very little of the original Hampton Court *interior*, built and furnished by Cardinal Wolsey, exists. Just here and there we find delightfully dark little dens with the original linen-fold panellings and ceilings that are a ravishment to look upon; but mostly the rooms are high, plain-panelled, and with

ENLARGEMENT OF "JACOBEAN" SPRAY.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

the quaint ingle-nook fireplaces, with shelves above, upon which Mary placed her lovely "blue and white" porcelain which had been brought to her by the Dutch merchants who at that time were the great traders of the sea.

Queen Mary ought to be regarded as the patron saint of English needlewomen. She was happiest when employed furnishing every bed-covering, every chair and stool, and supplying the hangings for her favourite home. It is said that she spent her days over her embroidery frame, knowing full well that affairs of State were in the capable hands of her husband.

There are few relics left of her handiwork outside Hampton Court. She left no dainty little book-covers, bags, or boxes, as her ideas were fixed on larger pieces of embroidery. Had she lived in the Berlin-wool picture days, she would have filled every nook and cranny with these atrocities, as many humbler devotees to the needle have done to our own knowledge. Needlework can become a *passion*, and certainly Queen Mary must have possessed it.

After the complete collapse of the Stuart stump pictures, when every vestige of loyalty seems to have been swept away with the hated James II., the ancient Petit Point pictures came back into fashion. Very clever work was put into them, but, alas! their scope was purely to depict religious scenes of the rigorous kind. No dainty fairy-like little people now ruled in pictured story, but actual representations of Bible history.

The illustration of "The Baptism of the Ethi-

opian Eunuch by St. Philip" is a fair sample of the needlework picture of this time. The picture is a strange mixture of the early Stuart Petit Point, the Jacobean wall-hanging, and the newly revived religious spirit. The duck-pond, the swans and the water-plants might have been copied bodily from James I.'s time. The paroquet and the flying bird, and the immense leaves and blossoms, are direct from the wall-hangings, while the figures only too surely foretell the coming dark days of needlecraft, when a Scripture picture and a coarsely worked sampler were part of every girl's liberal education. The work in this picture is extremely good, and it is excruciatingly funny without intending to be so. The pretty little equipage with its diminutive ponies surely was never intended to carry either St. Philip or the Eunuch! The open book, with Hebraic inscription, is very delightful. It brings to mind the Tables of the Law rather than the light reading that the charming little Cinderella coach should carry.

These pictures are not common, and we scarcely know whether to be thankful for them or not. Unlike the early petit point, they were worked in *worsteds*, whereas the early pictures were wrought in silk. The moth has a natural affinity for wool, as we all know, and his tribe has cleared off many hundreds of examples. Why so many of the old Jacobean hangings remain is that they were worked for *use*, and not ornament, and even after they ceased to be fashionable ornaments for sitting and bed rooms, they were either relegated to the servants' quarters, or given to dependants, who used them

NEEDLEWORK PICTURE OF QUEEN ANNE PERIOD.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

constantly, shaking and keeping them in repair, as the eighteenth-century housewives liked to keep their homes swept and garnished.

It is strange to see these old Jacobean hangings (perhaps the drapery of the now tabooed four-post bedstead), which might some thirty years ago have been carried off for the asking, sell at Christie's for £800, as happened in the dispersal of the Massey-Mainwaring sale last year. Even a panel of no use except to frame as a picture, say 4 feet by 3 feet, will fetch £30 and a full-sized bed-cover can only be bought for over £100. The reason is not far to seek. The colouring and the drawing of this fine old Crewel-work are exquisite (even though the design savours of the grotesque), and Time has dealt very leniently with the dyes. I endeavoured to match some of these old worsteds a little time ago, and though able to find the colours, could not get the tone. After much tribulation I was advised to hang the skeins of worsted on the trees in the garden and *forget all about them*, and certainly wind and weather have softened the somewhat garish worsteds to the soft *fade* colours of the old work.

The same class of embroidery was executed during the reign of Queen Anne, though she herself did little of it. Costly silks and brocades and Venetian laces were the dress of the day, and no little dainty accessories appear to have been made.

XI

PICTORIAL NEEDLEWORK OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A FINE "PAINTED FACE" SILK-EMBROIDERED PICTURE.

(*Author's Collection.*)

XI

PICTORIAL NEEDLEWORK OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The "painted faces" period—Method of production—Revival of Scriptural "motifs"—Modern fakes—Black silk and hair copies of engravings.

AN immense number of pictures must have been worked during the eighteenth century. Almost, we might say, no English home is without an example. Much of the work is intensely bad, and only that Time has tenderly softened the colours, and the old-time dresses add an element of quaintness to the pictures, can they be tolerated. Works of art they are not, and, indeed, were never intended to occupy the place their owners now proudly claim for them. Just here and there a picture of the painted face type is a masterpiece of stitchery, as in the example illustrated, where every thread has been worked by an *artiste*. Looking at this little gem across a room, the effect is that of a charming old colour print, so tenderly are the lines of shading depicted. This is the only picture of this class that I have seen for years as an absolutely perfect specimen of the

eighteenth-century silk pictures, though doubtless many exist.

The discrepancy which is usually found is that, although the design and outline is perfect, the faces and hands exquisitely painted, the needlework part of the picture has been executed in a foolish, inartistic manner, and no method of light and shade has been observed. Some little time ago I published an article in one of the popular monthly Magazines illustrating this same picture, and was afterwards inundated with letters from correspondents from far and near sending their pictures for valuation and—admiration! Not one of these pictures was good, though there were varying degrees of *badness*. But in no instance was the painted face crudely drawn or badly coloured.

The explanation is that just as the modern needlewoman goes to a Needlework Depôt and obtains pieces of embroidery already commenced and the design of the whole drawn ready for completion, so these old needle pictures were sold ready for embroidering, the outline of the trees sketched in fine sepia lines, the distant landscape already painted, the faces and hands of the figures charmingly coloured, in many instances by first-class artists. When we remember that the eighteenth century was *par excellence* the great period of English portrait painting and colour printing, we can understand that possibly really fine artists were willing to paint these exquisite faces on fine silk and satin, just as good artists of the present day often paint "pot-boilers" while waiting for fame.

EMBROIDERED SILK PICTURE OF "THE LAST SUPPER."
Eighteenth Century.
(S. K. M. Collection.)

Angelica Kauffmann's style was often copied. Is it too much to believe that some of these charming faces may have been from her hands? We know that she painted furniture and china, therefore why not the faces of the needlework pictures so nearly akin to her own work?

The eighteenth-century costume was particularly adapted to this pretty work. We cannot imagine the voluminous robes of Queen Mary or Queen Anne in needle-stitchery, but the soft, silky lawns of the Georgian periods, the high-waisted bodices, the *bouffant* fichus and the flowing head-dresses, all were specially easy and graceful to work. Many of the pretty children Sir Joshua loved to paint were copied. "Innocence" made a charming picture, and several of the less rustic Morland pictures were copied.

We would imagine that when the beginnings of the picture were so glorious the needlewoman would have made some endeavour to work up to it. But, alas! it was not so. Though often the stitching is neat and small, not an idea of shading seems to have entered the worker's mind, and whole spaces, nay, a complete garment, are often worked solid in one tone of colour! On the whole there is far more artistic sense and feeling in the Stump pictures it is the fashion to deride.

Not always were dainty pastoral and domestic scenes worked. Very ghastly creations are still existent of scriptural subjects. Coarsely worked in wool, instead of silk, or in a mixture of both. The painting is still good, but the work and the

subjects are execrable! "Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac," on the pile of faggots already laid, and Isaac bound on it, with a very woolly lamb standing ready as a substitute, was a favourite subject. "Abraham dismissing Hagar and Ishmael," with a malignant-looking Sarah in the distance, vies with the former in popularity. "The Woman of Samaria," and "The Entombment," are another pair of unpleasant pictures which we are often called upon to admire.

The best of these pictures were worked in fine floss silk, not quite like the floss silk of to-day, as it had more twist and body in it, with just a little fine chenille, and very tiny bits of silver thread to heighten the effect. The worst were worked in *crewel* wools of crude colours. Fortunately, the moth has a special predilection for these pictures, and they are slowly being eaten out of existence, in spite of being cherished as heirlooms and works of art.

Another pretty style which we seldom meet with was some part of the picture covered with the almost obsolete "ærophane," a kind of chiffon or crape which was much in request even up to fifty years ago. A certain part of the draperies was worked on the silk ground, without any attempt at finish. This was covered with ærophane, and outlined so as to attach it to the figure. This again was worked upon with very happy effects, very fine darning stitches making the requisite depth of shading. The illustration shows the use of this, but this cannot be said to be a very good specimen

"PAINTED FACE" SILK-EMBROIDERED PICTURE.

Eighteenth Century.

(Author's Collection.)

These painted face, silk-worked pictures are the only needlework examples the collector *need to beware of*, as they are being reproduced by the score. The method of working in the poorer specimens is very simple, and it pays the "faker" to sell for £2 or £3 what takes, perhaps, only half a day to produce. When a well-executed picture is produced it is worth money, but so far I have seen none, except at the Royal School of Needlework, where the copying of old pictures of the period is exceedingly well done, and not intended to deceive. The prices, however, are almost prohibitive, as no modern needlework picture is worth from £15 to £30. They are, after all, only copies, and in no sense of the word works of art.

During the eighteenth century, also, a fashion set in of adorning engravings with pieces of cloth, silk, and tinsel. At best it was a stupid fancy, and was responsible for the destruction of many fine old mezzotints and coloured prints. The hands, face, and background of an engraving were cut out, and pasted on a sheet of cardboard, pieces of some favourite brocaded gown, perhaps, were attached to the neck and shoulders, tiny lace tuckers were inserted, and gorgeous jewellery was simulated by wretched bits of tinsel trimming. The realism of the Stuart stump picture was never so atrocious as this baleful invention, which was as meretricious as a waxwork show.

Not so popular, but far better, were the pictures worked on white silk with black silk and hair. There were no artistic aspirations about these—they

were copies in black and white of the engravings of the day, just as a pen-and-ink or pencil copy might be made. Very dainty stitchery was put in them, the stronger parts of the lines being in fine black silk, the finer and more distant being worked in human hair of various shades from black to brown. Occasionally golden and even white hair is used, and the effect is often that of a faded engraving. The silk ground on which these little pictures were worked is, however, often cracked with age, and many pretty specimens are ruined. The illustration shows an example of the type of picture, and depicts "Charlotte weeping over the Tomb of Werther."

BLACK SILK AND HAIR PICTURE.

Imitation of Engraving. Eighteenth Century.

(*Author's Collection.*)

XII

NEEDLEWORK PICTURES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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NEEDLEWORK PICTURES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Entire decline of needlework as an art—Miss Linwood's invention!—The Berlin-wool pictures—Lack of efficient instruction—Waste of magnificent opportunity at South Kensington Museum.

IT were kindest to ignore 19th century needlework, but in a book treating of English embroidery something must be said to bridge over the time when Needlecraft as an Art was *dead*. During the earlier part of the century taste was bad, during the middle it was beyond criticism, and from then to the time of the "greenery-yallery" æsthetic revival all and everything made by woman's fingers ought to be buried, burnt, or otherwise destroyed. Indeed, if that drastic process could be carried out from the time good Queen Adelaide reigned to the early "eighties" we might not, now and ever, have to bow our heads in utter abjection.

The originator and moving spirit of this bad period was Miss Linwood, who conceived the idea of copying oil paintings in woolwork. She died

in 1845. Would that she had never been born! When we think of the many years which English women have spent over those wickedly hideous Berlin-wool pictures, working their bad drawing and vilely crude colours into those awful canvases, and imagining that they were earning undying fame as notable women for all the succeeding ages, death was too good for Miss Linwood. The usual boiling oil would have been a fitter end! Miss Linwood made a great *furore* at the time of her invention, and held an exhibition in the rooms now occupied by Messrs. Puttick & Simpson, Leicester Square. Can we not imagine the shade of the great Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose home and studio these rooms had been, revisiting the glimpses of the moon, and while wandering up and down that famous old staircase forsaking his home for ever after one horrified glance at Miss Linwood's invention?

Not only Miss Linwood, but Mrs. Delany and Miss Knowles made themselves famous for Berlin-wool pictures. The kindest thing to say is that the specimens which are supposed to have been worked by their own hands are considerably better than those of the half-dozen generations of their followers. During the middle and succeeding twenty years of the nineteenth century the notable housewife of every class amused herself, at the expense of her mind, by working cross-stitch pictures with crudely coloured wools (royal blue and rose-pink, magenta, emerald-green, and deep crimson were supposed to represent the actual colours of Nature), on very coarse canvas. Landseer's paint-

ings were favourite studies, "Bolton Abbey in the Olden Times" lending itself to a choice range of violent colours and striking incidents. Nothing was too sacred for the Berlin-wool worker to lay hands upon. "The Crucifixion," "The Nativity," "The Flight into Egypt," "The Holy Family" were not only supposed to show the skill of the worker, but also the proper frame of mind the embroideress possessed. Pleasing little horrors such as the "Head of the Saviour in His Agony," and that of the Virgin with all her tortured mother love in her eyes were considered fit ornaments for drawing-room, which by the way were also adorned with wool and cotton crochet antimacassars, waxwork flowers under glass, and often astonishingly good specimens of fine Chelsea, Worcester, and Oriental china.

Never was the questions of how "having eyes and yet seeing not" more fully exemplified. The nation abounded in paintings, prints, fine needlework, and the product of our greatest period of porcelain manufacture. Fine examples were at hand everywhere. Exquisite prints belonging to our only good period, the eighteenth century, were common; yet rather than try their skill in copying these, the needlewomen, who possessed undoubted skill, enthusiasm, and infinite patience, preferred to copy realistic paintings of the Landseer school and the highly coloured prints of the Baxter and Le Blond period.

Unfortunately, the craze is by no means buried. Within the last twelve months I was invited to see

the "works" of a wonderful needlewoman in a little Middlesex village. The local clergyman and doctor were sufficiently benighted even in these days of universal culture to admire her work, and her fame had spread. Room after room was filled with 10 by 8-feet canvases; every drawer in the house was crammed with the result of this clever woman's work—for clever she undoubtedly was. After exhausting all the known subjects of Landseer and his school, she had struck out a line for herself, and had copied the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News* Supplements of the stirring scenes from the South African War, such as "The Siege of Ladysmith," "The Death of the Prince Imperial" in all its gruesome local colouring, were worked on gigantic canvases. Her great *chef d'œuvre* was, however, the memorial statue of Queen Victoria, copied from the *Graphic* Supplement *in tones of black, white, and grey*, a most clever piece of work; but—well, she was happy and more than delighted with my perfectly honest remark that I had *never seen anything like it!*

Ah! if only this dear woman and the many others who are wasting their time and eyesight over fashions which perish could only be reached and aroused by the influence of the lovely old English stitchery of our great period! If only the purblind authorities and custodians of our National collections could awaken to the infinite possibilities which they hold, once again "Opus Anglicum" might rule the world, and the labour of even one woman's life might be of lasting value. It is useless to refer to the many

schools of embroidery there are in different parts of the country, where fine work is being done on the best lines. These schools, from the Royal School of Needlework downwards, are "closed corners," and no attempt is made to reach the great public. The Royal School of Needlework is maintained by no subsidy as it ought to be, but by the many ladies of position and taste who liberally support it, both for the instruction and employment of "ladies of reduced circumstances," and for *the disposal of its work at very high prices.* Other schools in town are simply private adventure institutions, run at a considerable profit to the principals.

The superb collection at South Kensington might as well be buried in the crypt of Westminster Cathedral for all the value it is to the general public. There is not the slightest attempt to allow these unique pieces of "Opus Anglicum" to point a moral or adorn a tale. The magnificent copes and vestments, of which there are some score, are merely tabulated, paragraphed, and photographed, and there is an end of them. During my constant visits to these treasures of English Art I have not once discovered another interested visitor amongst these beautiful vestments; and the officials, when interviewed, though perfectly courteous, apparently resent inquiries; and woe betide the unfortunate inquirers who *might* have found the required information from the tiny little printed card hidden either too low or too high in the dark recesses of the corridors, and so spared these *savants* the trouble of an interview!

Why a continuous course of lectures on this and every kindred Art subject is not made compulsory at the Victoria and Albert Museum is one of the burning questions of the hour among the cultured collectors of the day. The custodians are supposed to be men of special insight in the branches over which they preside, yet for all the advantage to the public they might as well be waxwork dummies. What we want as a nation is "culture while we wait," and writ so large that those who run may read, and until this consummation is attained we shall ever remain in the Slough of Despond, and Art for Art's sake will continue dead.

XIII

EMBROIDERY IN "COSTUME"

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EMBROIDERY IN "COSTUME"

Early Greek garments—Biblical references to embroidery—Ecclesiastical garments — Eighteenth-century dresses, coats, and waistcoats—Muslin embroideries.

THE subject of Costume has been most admirably treated in another volume of this series, but a reference must be made to it as affecting our topic, English Embroidery, as costume has played no little part in its history.

From the earliest ages embroidery has been used to decorate garments. The ancient Greeks embroidered the hems of their graceful draperies in the well-known Greek fret and other designs so invariably seen on the old Greek vases. The legend that Minerva herself taught the Greeks the art of embroidery illustrates how deeply the art was understood; and the pretty story told by an old botanist of how the foxglove came by its name and its curious bell-like flowers is worth repeating. In the old Greek days, when gods and goddesses were regarded as having the attributes of humanity in

addition to those of deities, Juno was one day amusing herself with making tapestry, and, after the manner of the people, put a thimble on her finger. Jupiter, "playing the rogue with her," took her thimble and threw it away, and down it dropped to the earth. The goddess was very wroth, and in order to pacify her Jupiter turned the thimble into a flower, which now is known as Digitalis, or finger-stole.

This little fairy tale can scarcely be taken as proof conclusive of the existence of either needle tapestry or thimble use, but its telling may amuse the reader.

In all ancient histories we find continuous references to the embroidered garment worn by its people. It was well recognised that no material was sufficiently beautiful not to be further embellished with rich embroideries. In the Psalms we find that "Pharaoh's daughter shall be brought to the king in a raiment of needlework," and that "her clothing is of wrought gold."

Phrygia was above all the country most noted for embroideries of gold, and for many years the name "Phrygian embroidery" was sufficient to describe any highly decorated specimen. It is said that the name of the vestment or trimming, the "orphry" is derived from the word "Auri-phrygium," meaning "gold of Phrygian embroidery."

The Phrygians are credited with having taught the Egyptians the art, while the Hebrews, while sojourning in the land of Egypt, learned the art from their captors, and carried it with them all

through their journeys to the Promised Land, and their final settlement in Palestine. The mention of gold and purple embroideries, both as garments and hangings, is conspicuous throughout all Bible history. The Egyptian and Greek arts are in almost all respects concurrent. The Phœnicians carried examples of each country's work from one to another. After the conquest of Greece the Romans absorbed her art, and developed it in their own special style. They in turn carried their arts and crafts to Gaul and Britain, and by degrees needlecraft permeated the whole of Europe.

Dealing with the embroidered costumes of our own country, the ancient records, illuminated Missals, and other contemporary data show that very sumptuous were both the ecclesiastical and lay garments. Heavy gold embroideries were worked on the hems of skirts and mantles. The Kings' coronation robes and mantles were beautiful specimens of handicraft, often after a king's death being given to the churches for vestments. From Anglo-Saxon to Norman times extensive use was made of the work of the needle for clothing, but after the Conquest till quite late in the Tudor period little has been found to throw light upon the use of embroidery for the lay dress of the time. All woman's taste and energy seem to have been devoted to make monumental embroideries for church use.

It was, indeed, not until the gorgeous period of Henry VIII. that embroidery, as distinct from garment-making, appeared; and then everything

became an object worthy of decoration. Much fine stitchery was put into the fine white undergarments of that time, and the overdresses of both men and women became stiff with gold thread and jewels. Much use was made of slashing and quilting, the point of junction being dotted with pearls and precious stones. Noble ladies wore dresses heavily and richly embroidered with gold, and the train was so weighty that train-bearers were pressed into service. In the old paintings the horses belonging to kings and nobles wear trappings of heavily embroidered gold. Even the hounds who are frequently represented with their masters have collars massively decorated with gold bullion.

The skirts of the ladies of this time were thickly encrusted with jewels, folds of silk being crossed in a kind of lattice-work, each crossing being fixed with a pearl or jewel, and a similar precious stone being inserted in the square formed by the trellis. The long stomachers were one gleaming mass of jewelled embroidery, the tiny caps or headdresses being likewise heavily studded with gems.

During the reign of Charles I. a much daintier style of dress appeared. Velvet and silken suits were worn by the men, handsomely but appropriately trimmed with the fine "punto in aria" or Reticella laces of Venice; and in this and the three succeeding reigns dress was of sumptuous velvets, satins, and heavy silks, unembroidered, but trimmed, and in Charles II.'s time *loaded* with costly laces. It will be noted that whenever lace

Photo by *E. Gray, Bayswater.*

MRS. TICKELL AND HER SISTER, MRS. SHERIDAN, BY GAINSBOROUGH, SHOWING HOW LACE WAS SUPERSEDED BY FILMY MUSLINS.

(*Dulwich Gallery.*)

is in the ascendant, embroidery suffers, as is quite natural. Lace itself is sufficient adornment for fine raiment.

As the use of the fine Venetian and Flemish and French laces declined, and tuckers and frillings of Mechlin, Valenciennes, and Point d'Angleterre appeared, the use of embroidery asserted itself, and the pretty satins and daintily coloured silks of William and Mary, Queen Anne, and more specially the earlier Georges, began to be embroidered in a specially delicate fashion. Fine floss silk was used in soft colourings, and whole surfaces were covered with tiny embroidered sprays of natural-coloured flowers. Really exquisite stitchery was put into the graceful honeysuckle, the pansy, carnation, and rose clusters which decorated the dresses. The bodices, sacques, and skirts of the early eighteenth-century ladies were embroidered with real artistic taste and feeling. Some of the old dresses kept at South Kensington show the exquisite specimens of this class of needlework ; while the coats and waistcoats of the sterner sex are not a whit behind the feminine garments in beauty. The long waistcoats were most frequently made of cream, pale blue, or white silk or satin, delightfully embroidered with tiny sprays of blossoms, and fastened with fine old paste buttons ; while the coat, frequently of brocade, was heavily embroidered down the front with three or four inches of solid embroidery of foliage and flowers, oftentimes mixed with gold and silver threads. The tiny cravat of Mechlin, cuff ruffles, knee breeches, silken hose, and buckled shoes, along with the

powdered hair, complete a costume that has never been equalled, either before or afterwards, in beauty grace, and elegance. During the William IV. and the long Victorian period, with the exception of a very fine embroidery on muslin, in the earlier part of it, nothing but fine stitchery for the use of underwear was made, if we except the hundreds and thousands of yards of cut and buttonholed linen which seemed to have been the solace and delight of our grandmothers when they allowed themselves to be torn away from their beloved Berlin-wool work. To sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam appears to have been the amusement of the properly constituted women of the early and mid-nineteenth century.

XIV

SALE PRICES

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SALE PRICES

ANCIENT embroideries so seldom come into the sale-rooms that it is rarely an opportunity occurs for obtaining market prices, therefore Lady Wolseley's sale on July 12, 1906, must be accepted as a standard. Immense prices are asked at the antique shops, the dealers apparently basing their prices on this sale by auction and *doubling* them. I have visited every shop in the trade in search of prices for this book before procuring the auctioneer's catalogue, and was aghast at the terrific sums asked for oftentimes indifferent specimens in comparison to what was paid in the auction-room. During the past year anything from £15 15s. to £40 has been paid at Christie's for specimens of varying degrees of perfection of work and condition. The latter state is even of greater importance than the first, as no matter how good the work originally, if discoloured and frayed, prices go down and down. Nearly all the finest specimens of the Stump-work period are marred by the tarnishing of the gold and silver threads. Instead

of these being a glory and a great enhancement to the embroidery, they prove a great disfigurement, and thereby cause a considerable reduction in value.

The earlier petit point pictures, having little or no bullion in their execution (and when cared for and not exposed to too much sunlight), have kept their condition very well, and now are quite the favourite kind for collection. It speaks much for the quality of the silks used and the dyes of nearly three hundred years ago that the fugitive greens and blues and delicate roses in these little works of art, as in the superb tapestries of the same date, should be as fine as when made, whereas to-day's colours are as fleeting as the glories of the rainbow.

The following are the principal prices in Lady Wolseley's sale:

	£	s.	d.
A small bag, red and gold brocade .	2	15	0
A small bag or purse	5	0	0
A fine bead book-cover . . .	6	0	0
Same, trimmed with silver lace (Harris)	6	16	0
A pair of embroidered shoes (Harris) .	6	0	0
A small pocket-book, silk embroidery on silver ground	8	17	6
A pair of Stuart shoes	9	19	6
A stumpwork picture, a most curious globe, showing Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, 1648 (S. G. Fenton) .	24	0	0
A double book of Psalms, embroidered binding with Tudor rose . . .	23	10	0

	£	s.	d.
A petit point picture, 12½ × 9½ . .	11	11	0
A small picture, partly sketched and partly worked	4	14	6
A Stuart stump picture, 18 × 15½ .	18	18	0
A Stuart stump picture, King under canopy, 17½ × 14	14	14	6
A Stuart bullion picture, vase, in tortoiseshell frame, 23 × 18 . .	8	8	0
Same, with Herodias's daughter and John the Baptist	5	5	0
A portrait of Henry, Prince of Wales, in flat-stitch on rose satin . . .	21	0	0
Another on satin, "Bathsheba," spangled, 17 × 13	6	16	0
Another on satin, birds on gold and silver, 13 × 13 (Harris) . . .	13	13	6
A bead picture, 15 × 11 . . .	11	11	0
A stump and bead picture, 12 × 11 .	12	1	6
A small book-cover, 14 × 8 . . .	12	12	0
A Stuart stump picture, figures and silver fountain, tortoiseshell frame, 22 × 16	15	15	0
A stump picture, lady with coral necklace, 18 × 12	23	10	0
A stump picture, lady under arch with a black swan, 20 × 16 (Stoner)	34	0	0
A stump picture, King Charles as Ahasuerus with Haman and Mordecai, and pearl-embroidered carpet, 23 × 17	28	0	0
A stump picture, lady under a canopy, large pearls, 13 × 19, (Stoner) . .	34	0	0

	£	s.	d.
A Stuart Petit Point picture, Abraham and Hagar	16	16	0
A Stuart petit point picture, "Judgment of Paris," 24 × 17	25	0	0
A Stuart petit point picture, King Solomon and Queen of Sheba . .	18	18	0
A beadwork picture, lady and gentleman, lion and unicorn, 21 × 17 .	12	12	6
An embroidered picture, "Peter denying Christ," 24 × 17 (S. G. Fenton) .	9	19	6
A petit point picture, lake with boats and figures, 15 × 12 (Harris) . .	14	14	6
A large stump picture, with horse and rider and figures of four seasons	30	10	0
A stumpwork picture, four figures, castle and birds and flowers (S. G. Fenton)	33	0	0
A picture sketched on white satin, not worked	4	15	0
A Stuart picture on canvas . . .	9	19	6
A fine Stuart jewel-casket, numerous secret drawers, covered in needlework (S. G. Fenton)	47	5	0
A Stuart box, covered with bullion-work (S. G. Fenton)	12	12	0
A Stuart box, with embroidery and pearls (Spero)	16	16	0
A Stuart box, coloured bullion, 10 × 6	9	9	0
An embroidered box, with portrait on lid (S. G. Fenton)	53	11	0

	£	s.	d.
A Stuart mirror, covered with stump embroidery, representing Charles I. and his Queen (illustrated), (Rosthron)	102	18	0
Another mirror, with painted and embroidered figures (Harris) . .	34	0	0
A Charles I. mirror in old lace and gold frame, with borders in embroidery, with portrait, castle, and floral decoration	40	0	0
3 yds. 13 inches long, 12 inches deep, Cornice in Petit Point, Christie's, July, 1908 (Harris)	204	15	0

XV

CONCLUSION

XV

CONCLUSION

NEEDLEWORK as a national art is as dead as the proverbial door-nail; whether or not it ever regains its position as a craft is a matter of conjecture. Personally, I incline to the belief that it is absolutely extinct. The death-knell rang for all time when the sewing-machine was invented. The machine has been a very doubtful blessing, as it has allowed even the art of stitchery in ordinary work to slide into the limbo of forgotten things. What woman now knows what it is to "back-stitch" a shirt cuff, for instance, drawing a thread for guidance, and carefully going back two or three threads in order to make a neat, firm line of stitching? The sewing-machine does all this, and *does* it *well*, a clever machinist turning out more work in a week than a seamstress in a year. If this were all, it would be no matter for regret, but with the necessity for needlework has vanished the desire. The lady quoted in Green's History is now non-existent. "She was a pattern of sobriety unto many, very

seldom seen abroad except at church; when others recreated themselves at holidays and other times, she would take her needlework, and say, 'Here is my recreation.'"

In spite of the many Schools of Embroidery, with a few notable exceptions, nothing is done to raise the standard of embroidery above making miserable little cushion-covers, table-centres, and suchlike pretty fripperies for the temporary adornment of the house. The women of Germany, Holland, Sweden, Italy, on the contrary, take a great interest in the embroidery of the bed and table linen and the really artistic embroidery of their national costumes. Nothing of this is seen in England. Table linen is bought *ready hemmed* at the shop. Dainty tea-cloths and serviettes are purchased ready embroidered (by machine) and trimmed with machine-made lace. Even *lingerie* of all classes is machine-made and bought by the dozen, instead of being made by the daughters of the house.

The only hope of a revival lies in the various Art schools in the country where designing for fine embroidery and lace is encouraged. Unfortunately, however, equal facilities are offered for designing of machine-made imitations. The Royal School of Needlework, not being a Government institution, offers no encouragement to outsiders. It is in the hands of a number of ladies, who manage it as they will; and although very fine work is accomplished, they trust too much to modern designers and artists who work out their own pet theories and hobbies. If only they would put aside all theories

and new ideas, and *go back* to the best periods of English art both for their designs and execution, even yet, with the intelligent use of the glorious examples in the adjoining Museum, much might be done to revivify this expiring art.

FINIS

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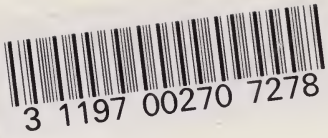
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